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Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs)

Identities, Roles and Strategies

James W. Moore

Defence R&D Canada
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Abstract

The Socio-cognitive Systems (SCS) Section at DRDC Toronto has undertaken a Technology Investment Fund (TIF) Project entitled *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics*. The aim of this multi-year Project is to advance our understanding of

- the strategic roles of ANSAs in the context of violent intergroup conflict, and
- the operational dynamics—that is, the group structures, functions, and processes—of ANSAs, in both their internal and external aspects, that facilitate the performance of these roles.

Broadly speaking, we seek to shed some light upon what ANSAs do and why they do it, situating their motivations, intent, and behaviours in the wider context of violent intergroup conflict. And, most importantly, we hope to answer the question whether, with this understanding, we can predict what ANSAs are likely to do in a given set of circumstances. This Technical Memorandum (TM) presents some reflections on the first of these two research objectives: the strategic roles of ANSAs. It is one of two interlocking Keystone Documents in Phase 1 Conceptual Development of the Project, the primary task of which is to define the Project's conceptual problem space.

Résumé

La Section des systèmes sociocognitifs (SCS) de RDDC Toronto a entrepris un projet financé par le Fonds d'investissement technologique (FIT) intitulé *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics* (Cadre conceptuel pour comprendre les motivations des acteurs armés non étatiques (AANE) : rôles stratégiques et dynamique opérationnelle). Ce projet pluriannuel vise à accroître nos connaissances par rapport aux aspects suivants :

- Les *rôles stratégiques* des AANE dans le cadre de conflits intergroupes violents
- La *dynamique opérationnelle* – c'est-à-dire les structures, les fonctions et les procédés collectifs – des AANE, liée à la fois à des aspects internes et externes et qui facilite l'adoption des rôles stratégiques.

De façon générale, nous cherchons à comprendre ce que font les AANE et pourquoi ils le font, et à déterminer leurs motivations, leurs intentions et leurs comportements dans le contexte des conflits intergroupes violents. Plus important encore, nous espérons savoir, avec les connaissances acquises, s'il est possible de *prévoir ce qu'un AANE est susceptible de faire* dans un ensemble donné de circonstances. Ce document technique (DT) présente certaines réflexions sur le premier de ces deux objectifs de recherche, soit les rôles stratégiques des AANE. Il est le premier de deux documents clés qui ont été produits dans le cadre de la phase du développement théorique du projet, dont la tâche principale est de définir la question conceptuelle du projet.

Executive summary

Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Identities, Roles and Strategies

James W. Moore; DRDC Toronto TM 2011-082; Defence R&D Canada – Toronto; April 2013.

Introduction or background: This Technical Memorandum (TM) presents some reflections on the the strategic roles of Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs). We begin this investigation with a statement of the central problem. Simply put, *we in the Canadian national security community have an overly narrow view of the strategic roles of ANSAs and the strategies they employ.* The picture we typically paint of these non-state adversaries—as found in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) doctrine on irregular warfare and counterinsurgency (COIN)—looks something like this. The lodestone for an armed non-state actor is political power. At a minimum, the ANSA is committed to seizing political power from the established authorities; in the extreme, it seeks to transform society’s fundamental political, economic, and social institutions and relationships in line with its (often utopian) vision of the world. The ANSA sees “the people” as the centre of gravity in its drive for power and sees itself as the leading element in the people’s struggle for survival, whether as a distinct class, cultural or ethnic group, or other “imagined community.” It tries to win, if not the allegiance, at least the acquiescence of the local populace over the course of a protracted politico-military campaign characterized largely by violence and intimidation. The path to power, as far as the ANSA is concerned, does not lie in peaceful engagement with its opponents. Rather, it stands in implacable, violent opposition to the peaceful resolution of social conflict; its reliance on violence and subversion only confirms its true, destructive intentions. Granted, at some point in its drive for power, the ANSA may agree to participate in a formal peace process. However, this is, at best, a tactical manoeuvre. The ANSA publicly proclaims its fidelity to the peaceful settlement of armed conflict, all the while working behind the scenes—often using carefully calibrated and deniable violent activity—to undermine any peace process and weaken its enemies. The picture of an ANSA that emerges from CAF doctrine, then, is that of a violent, irreconcilable foe against whom the CAF must seize every opportunity “to pre-empt, dislocate and disrupt.”

This is very much a one-sided image of ANSAs, though that does not make it wholly inaccurate. Many ANSAs or elements therein are indeed ruthless, brutal actors who cannot be reconciled on any reasonable terms. Nevertheless, something is missing from this picture. In the analysis that follows, three broad arguments will be put forth:

- First, accepting for the moment the assumption that the principal driver for these groups is the pursuit of political power, their ambitions do not invariably extend to appropriating *absolute or total* power. In some cases, ANSAs are willing to share control of state structures and institutions with other groups in society.
- Second, ANSAs are not invariably opposed to the peaceful resolution of armed conflict. By focusing narrowly on the strategic role of *spoiler*—defined as “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it”—we miss an entire category of strategic roles, that of the *partner*. A *partner* is a party that harbours limited political ambitions and is willing to share political power with other actors. What distinguishes the *partner* from the *spoiler* is that the former’s commitment to a peaceful resolution of conflict over the long term is genuine. In other words, ANSAs assume the strategic role of *partner* when they have made a *strategic commitment to peace*.
- Third, violence is not necessarily the “strategy of choice” for ANSAs in any and all circumstances. Their strategic repertoire is much more varied. For example, they may resort to non-violent action to weaken opponents or undermine a peace process. On the other hand, they may resort to violence in order, paradoxically, to support and sustain that process. Moreover, the conventional image of ANSAs overlooks a whole class of *constructive* strategies in which these groups engage, strategies in which the strategic effect sought is to strengthen the “hard” and “soft” power capabilities of the ANSA and the community it purports to represent.

Results: In the analysis, we flesh out a more nuanced understanding of this complex class of social actor. Along the way, we use *highlight boxes*—grey-shaded text boxes—to draw attention to the key points of the argument. Here, we pull together these highlight boxes and incorporate them in a *Concept Map* (see Figure 1). Briefly, a Concept Map (Cmap) is a visual model for organizing and representing knowledge, consisting of a semi-hierarchical arrangement of concepts and propositions. A Cmap allows us to graphically portray the flow of the argument extending over roughly 90 pages of text in one concise Figure.

Let us summarize the knowledge generated in this analysis as represented in the Cmap in Figure 1 (starting with the uppermost node and working our way down through the branches of the knowledge tree). We begin by defining the concept of an *Armed Non-state Actor* (ANSA), itself a neutral, technical term by which we hope to avoid prejudging these social actors through the labels we assign to them. Next, we set out the theoretical approach upon which the analysis is

grounded. Role theory provides us with insight on the *social roles* and *role identities* that social actors enact and hold. One of the key inferences from role theory tells us that, of the multiple roles we enact every day, different ones are *salient* for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances. Before we can explore the various conditions and circumstances that influence an ANSA's choice of role identities, we must first *establish the range of roles that are available to ANSAs*; this research task lies at the heart of this paper. We can identify three distinct role identities at the grand strategic level: *Transformers*, *Captors*, and *Stakeholders*. At the strategic level, ANSAs generally regard themselves as the *Vanguard* of their respective ingroups. Under this umbrella role identity, ANSAs may play secondary strategic roles of *spoiler* and *partner* in the context of a peace process intended to end an armed conflict. As for spoilers, we note that

- *other state and non-state actors*—and not only ANSAs—may engage in spoiling behaviour,
- spoiling behaviour is *actor-specific* and *context-dependent*,
- spoilers are *discursively constructed*, and
- ANSAs and other spoilers may engage in spoiling behaviour *in any arena* and *at any stage* of a peace process.

As for partners, the features distinguishing them from spoilers are that

- they are *willing to share power* with other social actors, and, most importantly,

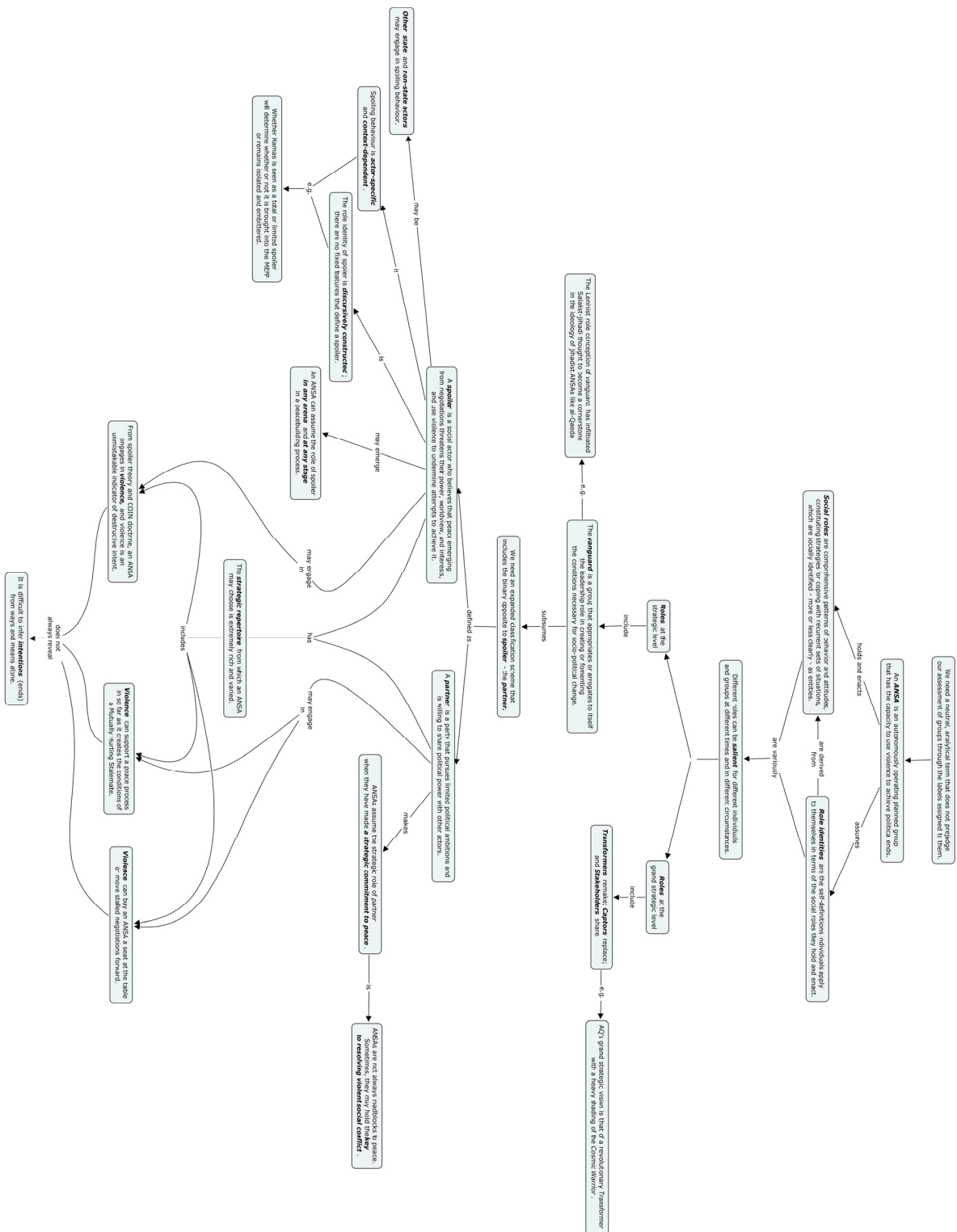


Figure 1: ANSA Identities, Roles, and Strategies—Summary Concept Map.

- they have made *a strategic commitment to peace*, the key to resolving violent social conflict.

Combining role identities at the grand strategic and strategic levels yields a comprehensive typology of 16 archetypical strategic roles, ranging from the *Outside Total Spoiler* (the stereotypical ANSA) to the *Inside Principled Partner*.

In terms of strategies, ANSAs have a vast *strategic repertoire* from which they may choose. The ends of these strategies may be either *destructive* or *constructive*, while the ways and means may be *violent*, *non-violent* or *cooperative*. Combining ends and ways/means yields six feasible strategies, which may be blended in turn to form 63 possible strategy sets, each with multiple variants. Clearly, this strategic repertoire encompasses much more than merely destructive violence. Though violent action may be used to attack and weaken an opponent and/or to obstruct the peaceful resolution of conflict, it can also be used constructively to empower an ANSA and the ingroup it purports to represent and/or to initiate, sustain, and support a peace process. Given this ambiguity, we must be careful when inferring intentions based solely on an ANSA's manifest violent behaviour.

Significance: The exercise in which we have engaged in this paper—where we have explored the multiplicity of role identities ANSAs may hold and the wide range of strategies they may enact—can be seen as both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that it helps us to better appreciate the essential complexity of this class of social actors. It is a curse in so far as it frustrates our attempts at predicting ANSA behaviour. The advantage of the stereotypical picture of ANSAs lies in its simplicity. The conventional ANSA “model” is made up of essentially two variables. It assumes ANSAs are driven by a single motivation—to seize dominant, if not exclusive, political power—and pursue this single-minded ambition using an unvarying strategy of destructive violence. This simplicity allows for *precise prediction* of ANSA behaviour, at least at the higher strategic level. However, in the human domain, we have to deal with “structures whose characteristic properties can be exhibited only by models made up of relatively large numbers of variables.” These “phenomena of organized complexity”—of which ANSAs are one—allow for, at best, *pattern predictions*, that is, “predictions of some of the general attributes of the structures that will form themselves, but not containing specific statements about the individual elements of which the structures will be made up.” We can offer up general predictions of the kinds of strategic roles and strategies we might expect from ANSAs in any given set of circumstances. However, precise prediction of ANSA behaviour is a goal that dangles tantalizingly beyond our reach. Admittedly not a very satisfactory state of affairs, but to echo the sentiment of Nobel economics laureate Friedrich August von Hayek: “I prefer true but imperfect knowledge, even if it

leaves much indetermined and unpredictable, to a pretence of exact knowledge that is likely to be false.”

Future plans: In the final phase of the TIF Project, the task will be to integrate the cumulative findings of the studies carried out in the first two phases of the Project and to refine the interim *Irregular Adversary (Insurgent)* [IA(I)] Cmap in order to create the key end-product of this research endeavour: the ANSA Cmap. Specifically, we will bring together the knowledge generated from the conceptual and integrative literature review studies carried out in Phase 1—of which this Technical Memorandum (TM) is one—with the results of the empirical and field investigations conducted on the Project’s calibration case—the Somali Islamist ANSA, al-Shabaab—in Phase 2.

Having refined its skeletal structure, the task would then be to populate the ANSA Cmap, that is, to provide its propositions with substantive content. The intent here would be to create a “back-end wiki” for the Cmap. That is, a wiki page—varying in length from a short paragraph to a 2–3 page summary article, depending on the complexity of the subject matter—would be written for each proposition, providing an overview of the substance of that proposition based on the extant scientific literature. The combined Cmap/wiki format would allow for the evolution—the continual editing and updating—of text entries as further information reflecting the latest scientific thinking becomes available. It would also facilitate the interconnection by hyperlink of wiki pages within the Cmap as well as links from the wiki pages to other textual, audio, and video resources on the Web.

Unfortunately, though the skeletal structure of the ANSA Cmap will be completed in Phase 3 of the TIF Project, it will not be possible with available in-house resources to fully populate the few score of propositions comprising the Cmap. This would be the first task in a follow-on Advanced Research Project (ARP). Further, once completed, the ANSA Cmap, with its associated rules and modalities for application, must be validated to ascertain its usefulness as a practical analytical tool for civilian and military intelligence operators. This would be the second task in the ARP: to test the ANSA Cmap with a select group of intelligence operators under controlled experimental conditions. How does the Cmap fare against other methods of knowledge acquisition? How well does it facilitate the desired result of the learning exercise—in this instance, increased operator understanding of the motivations, intentions, and behaviours of ANSAs—as compared to, say, an unguided search of the Internet for multimedia resources related to ANSAs (arguably the default option for many analysts absent more specific direction from colleagues or supervisors)? In other words, how effective is the Cmap as a *cognitive model* and *knowledge model*, two of the principal functions of the ANSA Cmap?

Sommaire

Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Identities, Roles and Strategies

James W. Moore ; DRDC Toronto TM 2011-082 ; R & D pour la défense Canada
– Toronto; avril 2013.

Introduction ou contexte : Ce document technique (DT) présente quelques réflexions sur les rôles stratégiques des acteurs armés non étatiques (AANE). Nous avons commencé cette étude par un énoncé du problème central. En termes simples, *les intervenants de la collectivité canadienne de la sécurité ont une perspective étroite des rôles stratégiques des AANE et des stratégies que ces derniers utilisent*. Le portrait que nous dressons de ces adversaires non étatiques — qui figure dans la doctrine des Forces armées canadiennes (FAC) sur la guerre irrégulière et la lutte anti-insurrectionnelle (COIN) — ressemble à celui-ci. La clé de voute d'un acteur armé non étatique est le pouvoir politique. À tout le moins, un AANE a comme objectif de s'emparer du pouvoir politique des autorités établies; son objectif extrême est de transformer les institutions et les relations politiques, économiques et sociales conformément à sa vision (souvent utopique) du monde. L'AANE considère que « les personnes » sont au centre de sa quête de pouvoir et se voit comme un élément directeur de la lutte des gens pour la survie, que ce soit en tant que groupe faisant partie d'une classe, d'une culture ou d'une ethnie distincte ou en tant qu'un autre type de « collectivité imaginaire ». Il essaie de gagner l'allégeance, sinon l'appui, de la population locale en menant une longue campagne politicomilitaire caractérisée en grande partie par la violence et l'intimidation. Pour un AANE, la voie du pouvoir ne repose pas sur l'affrontement pacifique de ses adversaires. Plutôt, il s'oppose de manière implacable et violente à la résolution pacifique des conflits sociaux; son recours à la violence et à la subversion ne fait que confirmer ses véritables intentions destructives. Il est vrai qu'à un certain moment de sa quête de pouvoir, un AANE pourrait accepter de participer à un processus officiel de paix. Cependant, cela est, au mieux, une manœuvre tactique. L'AANE proclame publiquement son adhésion au règlement pacifique du conflit armé, tout en manœuvrant en coulisse — souvent en ayant recours à des activités violentes soigneusement orchestrées et réfutables — pour miner le processus de pays et affaiblir ses ennemis. Le portrait décrit dans la doctrine des CAF, par conséquent, est celui d'un ennemi violent et irréconciliable contre lequel les FAC doivent saisir toute occasion pour « devancer ses actions, le disloquer et le perturber ».

Il s'agit d'une image partielle des AANE, mais qui n'est pas totalement inexacte. Bon nombre d'AANE ou d'éléments qui les composent sont en effet des acteurs impitoyables et brutaux qu'on

ne peut pas réconcilier dans des conditions raisonnables. Toutefois, ce portrait ne donne pas tous les éléments. Dans l'analyse qui suit, trois arguments généraux seront présentés :

- Premièrement, acceptons pour le moment l'hypothèse que la principale motivation de ces groupes est la recherche du pouvoir politique, leurs ambitions n'englobent pas invariablement le *pouvoir absolu ou complet*. Dans certains cas, les AANE sont disposés à partager le contrôle des structures étatiques et des institutions avec d'autres groupes sociaux.
- Deuxièmement, les AANE ne sont pas invariablement opposés à la résolution pacifique d'un conflit armé. Si nous nous limitons au rôle stratégique d'un *perturbateur* — défini comme étant « (traduction) des chefs et des parties qui croient que la paix acquise au moyen de négociations menace leur pouvoir, leur vision du monde et leurs intérêts et qui utilisent la violence pour faire échouer les tentatives pour y parvenir » — nous laissons de côté une catégorie complète de rôles stratégiques, soit celui de *partenaire*. Un *partenaire* est une partie qui nourrit des ambitions politiques limitées et est disposée à partager le pouvoir politique avec d'autres acteurs. Ce qui fait la distinction entre un perturbateur et un partenaire, c'est que l'engagement de ce dernier envers une résolution pacifique du conflit à long terme est véritable. En d'autres termes, un AANE assume le rôle stratégique de partenaire lorsqu'il a pris un *engagement stratégique envers la paix*.
- Troisièmement, la violence n'est pas nécessairement la « stratégie privilégiée » par les AANE dans toutes les circonstances. Leur répertoire de stratégies est beaucoup plus varié. Par exemple, ils peuvent avoir recours à des mesures non violentes pour affaiblir leur adversaire ou compromettre le processus de paix. En revanche, ils peuvent utiliser la violence paradoxalement pour appuyer et nourrir ce processus. De plus, le portrait conventionnel des AANE laisse de côté un ensemble de stratégies *constructives* auxquelles s'adonnent ces groupes, des stratégies qui ont pour effet recherché de renforcer les capacités « matérielles » et « non techniques » des AANE et de la collectivité qu'ils disent représenter.

Résultats : Lors de l'analyse, nous avons étoffé une compréhension plus nuancée de cette catégorie complexe d'acteurs sociaux. Pour ce faire, nous avons utilisé des cases surlignées — en gris — pour attirer l'attention sur les principaux points de l'argument. Dans ce document, nous avons rassemblé ces cases surlignées et nous avons créé un *schéma conceptuel* (voir la figure 1). En gros, le schéma conceptuel est un modèle visuel permettant d'organiser et de représenter les

connaissances. Il est constitué de concepts et de propositions qui sont représentés selon une structure semi-hiérarchique. Un schéma conceptuel nous permet d'illustrer graphiquement la logique de l'argument, qui est présentée dans environ 90 pages de texte, en une seule figure concise.

Résumons les connaissances résultant de cette analyse, qui sont représentées dans le schéma conceptuel de la figure 1 (en commençant par le nœud supérieur et en descendant dans les branches de l'arbre de connaissance). Premièrement, nous définissons le concept d'*acteur armé non étatique* (AANE), qui est un terme technique neutre qui, nous l'espérons, devrait éviter de préjuger ces acteurs sociaux en leur attribuant des étiquettes. Ensuite, nous établissons l'approche théorique sur laquelle l'analyse est fondée. La théorie des rôles nous renseigne sur les rôles sociaux et sur les identités de ces acteurs sociaux. Une des déductions clés de la théorie des rôles est la suivante : parmi les multiples rôles que nous adoptons chaque jour, ceux qui priment pour différentes personnes et différents groupes sont différents en fonction du moment et des circonstances. Avant de pouvoir explorer les diverses conditions et circonstances qui influent sur le choix d'identité des AANE, il faut d'abord définir *l'ensemble des rôles s'offrant à un AANE*, qui est le thème principal de cette étude. Nous pouvons relever trois rôles distincts au niveau stratégique supérieur : *transformateur*, *ravisser* et *partie prenante*. Au niveau stratégique, les AANE se considèrent généralement comme étant à l'avant-garde de leur groupe. Dans cet ensemble regroupant les rôles, les AANE peuvent adopter les rôles stratégiques secondaires de *perturbateur* et de *partenaire* dans le contexte d'un processus de paix visant à mettre fin à un conflit armé. En ce qui a trait aux perturbateurs, nous avons fait les constatations suivantes :

- *d'autres acteurs, d'État ou non*, — et non seulement les AANE — peuvent adopter un comportement nuisible
- le comportement nuisible *dépend de l'acteur et du contexte*
- les perturbateurs sont *discursivement construits*
- les AANE et d'autres perturbateurs peuvent avoir recours à un comportement nuisible *dans n'importe quelle sphère et à n'importe quelle étape* du processus de paix.

En ce qui a trait aux partenaires, voici les caractéristiques qui les distinguent des perturbateurs :

- ils sont disposés à *partager le pouvoir* avec d'autres acteurs sociaux et, plus importants encore

- ils ont pris un *engagement stratégique envers la paix*, qui est la clé de la résolution des conflits sociaux violents.

En combinant les identités du niveau stratégique supérieur et du niveau stratégique, on obtient une typologie complète de 16 rôles stratégiques archétypiques, allant de *perturbateur externe* (l'AANE type) au *partenaire intègre interne*.

En ce qui a trait aux stratégies, les AANE disposent d'un vaste répertoire de stratégies qu'ils peuvent employer. L'objectif de ces stratégies peut être soit *destructif*, soit *constructif*, tandis que les moyens utilisés peuvent être *violents*, *non violents* ou *coopératifs*. La combinaison des objectifs et des moyens donne six stratégies réalisables, qui peuvent ensuite être mélangées pour former 63 ensembles de stratégies, dont chacune peut avoir plusieurs variantes. Il est évident que ce répertoire stratégique n'est pas seulement composé de violence destructive. Même si des mesures violentes peuvent être prises pour attaquer et affaiblir un adversaire ou pour nuire à la résolution pacifique d'un conflit, elles peuvent également servir à renforcer le pouvoir d'un AANE et du groupe qu'il dit représenter ou à mettre en branle, maintenir et appuyer un processus de paix. Compte tenu de cette ambiguïté, il faut veiller à ne pas attribuer des intentions seulement en se fondant sur le comportement violent manifeste d'un AANE.

Portée : L'exercice que nous avons réalisé dans le cadre de la présente étude — dans laquelle nous avons exploré les multiples rôles que les AANE peuvent jouer ainsi que le large éventail de stratégies qu'ils peuvent utiliser — peut être considéré tant comme une bénédiction qu'une malédiction. C'est une bénédiction dans le sens où il nous a aidés à mieux comprendre la complexité de cette catégorie d'acteurs sociaux. C'est une malédiction, car il fait obstacle à nos tentatives de prédiction du comportement des AANE. L'avantage de ce portrait stéréotypé des AANE repose sur sa simplicité. Le « modèle » conventionnel des AANE est composé essentiellement de deux variables. Il suppose que les AANE ne sont guidés que par une seule motivation — s'emparer du pouvoir politique comme détenteur dominant, sinon exclusif — et poursuivre avec détermination cette ambition en employant une stratégie constante de violence destructive. Cette simplicité nous permet de prédire avec précision le comportement d'un AANE, du moins au niveau stratégique supérieur. Cependant, dans le domaine humain, nous devons composer avec des « (traduction) structures dont les propriétés caractéristiques peuvent seulement être présentes dans les modèles comportant un grand nombre de variables ». Ces « phénomènes de complexité organisée » — dont les AANE font partie — ne permettent, au mieux, qu'à *prévoir les tendances, c'est-à-dire faire des* « (traduction) prévisions sur certains des

attributs généraux des structures qui vont se former, mais qui ne contiennent pas d'énoncés précis sur les éléments individuels qui composeront ces structures ». Nous pouvons faire des prévisions générales sur les types de rôles et de stratégies que nous pouvons attendre des AANE dans un ensemble donné de circonstances. Cependant, la possibilité de prédire avec précision le comportement des AANE est un objectif qui se situe au-delà de notre portée. Il faut admettre que cette situation n'est pas très satisfaisante, mais elle fait écho au sentiment du lauréat du prix Nobel d'économie, Friedrich August von Hayek : « (traduction) Je préfère des connaissances véritables mais imparfaites, même si elles contiennent beaucoup d'éléments indéterminés et imprévisibles, à une prétention de connaissances exactes, qui est fort probablement fausse ».

Recherches futures : La dernière phase du projet du FIT consistera à intégrer les résultats cumulatifs des études menées lors des deux premières phases du projet et à mettre au point le schéma conceptuel provisoire d'un adversaire irrégulier (insurgé) [AI(I)] afin de créer le produit final de ce travail de recherche, soit le schéma des AANE. Plus précisément, nous rassemblerons les connaissances provenant de la recension des écrits théoriques et intégratifs qui a été effectuée à la phase 1— dont fait partie le présent document technique (DT) — et les résultats des recherches empiriques et sur le terrain qui ont été menées sur le cas d'étalonnage du projet — l'AANE islamiste somalien Al-Shabab — durant la phase 2.

Une fois que nous en aurons amélioré la structure de base, il nous restera à alimenter le schéma conceptuel des AANE, c'est-à-dire à donner du contenu concret à ses propositions. Ce que l'on vise ici, c'est créer un « wiki dorsal » pour le schéma conceptuel. Une page de wiki – qui peut comporter un court paragraphe ou un article sommaire de 2 ou 3 pages, selon la complexité de la matière – sera rédigée pour chacune des propositions, pour présenter un aperçu de la substance de la proposition en s'inspirant de la documentation scientifique existante. La combinaison de schéma conceptuel et wiki facilitera l'évolution (soit la modification et la mise à jour continues) des textes à mesure que l'on obtiendra de l'information sur les plus récentes réflexions scientifiques. Cela facilitera aussi l'interconnexion par hyperlien des pages de wiki à l'intérieur du schéma conceptuel, ainsi que l'ajout de liens vers d'autres ressources texte, audio et vidéo sur le Web.

Malheureusement, étant donné que la structure de base du schéma conceptuel de l'AANE ne sera terminée qu'à la phase 3 du projet du FIT, les ressources internes disponibles ne permettront pas de remplir entièrement les quelques vingtaines de propositions que comporte le schéma conceptuel. Cela constituera la première tâche du projet de suivi qui sera mené dans le cadre de projets de recherche avancée (PRA). De plus, une fois le schéma conceptuel de l'AANE terminé, de même que les règles et les modalités d'application, il faudra le valider pour déterminer s'il

constitue un outil analytique pratique pour les services de renseignement civil et militaire. La deuxième tâche du PRA consistera à mettre à l'essai le schéma conceptuel auprès d'un groupe sélectionné de spécialistes du renseignement dans des conditions expérimentales contrôlées. Comment le schéma conceptuel se compare-t-il aux autres méthodes d'acquisition des connaissances? Dans quelle mesure facilite-t-il l'atteinte des résultats souhaités de l'exercice d'apprentissage — dans le cas présent, permettre au spécialiste du renseignement de mieux comprendre les motivations, les intentions et les comportements des AANE — par rapport à, disons, une recherche non guidée sur Internet en vue de relever des ressources multimédias liées aux AANE (sans doute l'option par défaut d'un bon nombre d'analystes en l'absence de directives plus précises de la part des collègues ou des superviseurs)? Autrement dit, quelle est l'efficacité du schéma conceptuel en tant que *modèle cognitif* et *modèle de la connaissance*, soit les deux principales fonctions du schéma conceptuel des AANE énoncées ci-dessus?

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1 Introduction

The Socio-cognitive Systems (SCS) Section at DRDC Toronto has undertaken a Technology Investment Fund (TIF) Project entitled *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics* (see Figure 2). TIF Projects are forward-looking, high-risk but potentially high-payoff research endeavours conducted under the auspices of Defence Research & Development Canada (DRDC), the science and technology (S&T) agency of the Department of National Defence (DND), Canada.


<p>TIF Project 10az01 — Understanding ANSAs: Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics</p> 	<p>TIF Project 10az01 Objectives</p> <p>To advance our understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strategic roles of ANSAs in the context of violent intergroup conflict; and, the operational dynamics – i.e., the group structures, functions and processes – of ANSAs, in both their internal and external aspects, that facilitate the performance of these roles.
<p>Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3+1-year TIF project: Apr 09 - Mar 13 Allocated Resources: \$725k Research team: Socio-Cognitive Systems Section plus External Contractor support Project Manager/Principal Investigator: James Moore Tel: (416) 635-2000 Ext.3035 Email: james.moore@drdc-rddc.gc.ca 	<p>Research Program</p> <p><i>Phase 1 – Conceptual Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task: Define the conceptual problem space <p><i>Phase 2 – Framework Calibration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task: Calibrate the “first-cut” Irregular Adversary (Insurgent) Concept Map <p><i>Phase 3 – Project Integration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task: Integrate cumulative research findings and refine the final ANSA Concept Map

Figure 3: TIF Project 10az01 Quad Chart.

The aim of this multi-year Project is to advance our understanding of

- the *strategic roles* of ANSAs in the context of violent intergroup conflict, and
- the *operational dynamics*—that is, the group structures, functions, and processes—of ANSAs, in both their internal and external aspects, that facilitate the performance of these roles.

Broadly speaking, we seek to shed some light upon what ANSAs do and why they do it, situating their motivations, intent, and behaviours in the wider context of violent intergroup conflict. And, most importantly, we hope to answer the question whether, with this understanding, we can *predict what ANSAs are likely to do* in a given set of circumstances.

This Technical Memorandum (TM) presents some reflections on the first of these two research objectives: the strategic roles of ANSAs. It is one of two interlocking Keystone Documents in Phase 1 Conceptual Development of the Project (see Figure 3), the primary task of which is to define the Project's conceptual problem space (see Moore, 2012b, for an overview of the Project).

The investigation of the strategic roles of ANSAs presented in the pages that follow is lengthy and involved; this is unfortunate but unavoidable given the complexity of the topic. Consequently, before immersing ourselves in the details of the inquiry, it may be useful to set out in broad terms the main argument of the paper so that, as the reader progresses through the text, he or she may keep the various strands of analysis from getting tangled.

We begin with a statement of the central problem, as this author sees it. Simply put, *we in the Canadian national security community have an overly narrow view of the strategic roles of ANSAs and the strategies they employ*. The picture we typically paint of these non-state adversaries—as found in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) doctrine on irregular warfare and counterinsurgency (COIN) (see Canada/DAD, 2008a and 2008b)—looks something like this.¹ The lodestone for an armed non-state actor is political power. At a minimum, the ANSA is committed to seizing political power from the established authorities; in the extreme, it seeks to transform society's fundamental political, economic, and social institutions and relationships in line with its (often utopian) vision of the world. The ANSA sees “the people” as the centre of gravity in its drive for power and sees itself as the leading element in the people's struggle for survival, whether as a distinct class, cultural or ethnic group, or other “imagined community” (see Box 1, p. 19, for more on the latter concept). It tries to win, if not the allegiance, at least the acquiescence of the local populace over the course of a protracted politico-military campaign characterized largely by violence and intimidation. The path to power, as far as the ANSA is concerned, does not lie in peaceful engagement with its opponents. Rather, it stands in implacable, violent opposition to the peaceful resolution of social conflict; its reliance on violence and subversion only confirms its true, destructive intentions. Granted, at some point in its drive for power, the ANSA may agree to participate in a formal peace process. However, this is, at best, a tactical manoeuvre. The ANSA publicly proclaims its fidelity to the peaceful settlement of armed conflict, all the while working

¹ See Moore, 2012a, for a more detailed description of this “picture,” captured in the form of a Concept Map (Cmap) of an Irregular Adversary (Insurgent).

behind the scenes—often using carefully calibrated and deniable violent activity—to undermine any peace process and weaken its enemies. The picture of an ANSA that emerges from CAF doctrine, then, is that of a violent, irreconcilable foe against whom the CAF must seize every opportunity “to pre-empt, dislocate and disrupt” (Canada/DAD, 2008a, p. 6-3).

This is very much a one-sided image of ANSAs, though that does not make it wholly inaccurate. Many ANSAs or elements therein are indeed ruthless, brutal actors who cannot be reconciled on any reasonable terms. Nevertheless, something is missing from this picture. In the analysis that follows, three broad arguments will be put forth:

- First, accepting for the moment the assumption that the principal driver for these groups is the pursuit of political power, their ambitions do not invariably extend to appropriating *absolute or total* power. In some cases, ANSAs are willing to share control of state structures and institutions with other groups in society.
- Second, ANSAs are not invariably opposed to the peaceful resolution of armed conflict. By focusing narrowly on the strategic role of *spoiler*—defined as “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it” (Stedman, 1997, p. 5)—we miss an entire category of strategic roles, that of the *partner*. A *partner* is a party that harbours limited political ambitions and is willing to share political power with other actors. What distinguishes the *partner* from the *spoiler* is that the former’s commitment to a peaceful resolution of conflict over the long term is genuine. In other words, ANSAs assume the strategic role of *partner* when they have made a *strategic commitment to peace*.
- Third, violence is not necessarily the “strategy of choice” for ANSAs in any and all circumstances. Their strategic repertoire is much more varied. For example, they may resort to non-violent action to weaken opponents or undermine a peace process. On the other hand, they may resort to violence in order, paradoxically, to support and sustain that process. Moreover, the conventional image of ANSAs overlooks a whole class of *constructive* strategies in which these groups engage, strategies in which the strategic effect sought is to strengthen the “hard” and “soft” power capabilities of the ANSA and the community it purports to represent.

This, then, is the broad-brush argument of the paper. Now, let us set out the structure of the analysis supporting this argument. First, we begin with a discussion of terminology. Non-state

actors involved in armed conflict have been called many things down through the ages: insurgents, guerrillas, freedom fighters, terrorists, rebels, and brigands, to name but a few. Though colourful, these labels are not particularly useful in analytical terms largely because they carry too much emotive baggage. What we need is a technical term that does not unwittingly prejudice our understanding of these social actors because of the label we assign to them *a priori*. Hence, in Section 2, we set out a working definition for the admittedly cumbersome but hopefully neutral term of *Armed Non-state Actor* (ANSA).

In Section 3, we set out the theoretical approach upon which the analysis is grounded: *role theory*, drawn from sociology and social psychology, with particular focus on *social roles* and *role identities*. This theoretical approach assumes that, in our day-to-day lives, individuals and groups—including ANSAs—act out multiple roles with which are associated sets of expectations, norms, and behaviours. Of these multiple roles, different ones are salient for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances. The question this raises when trying to understand ANSAs is when or under what conditions do particular role identities become more prominent than others for these groups, especially with respect to roles characterized by the resort to violence. And is it possible to “nudge” these groups away from these violent role identities towards those that shun violence as a means of resolving social conflict?

These are undoubtedly important questions but are follow-on queries that must be set aside for future inquiry. Rather, the immediate research task is to establish *the range of strategic roles open to ANSAs*. This is the purpose of Section 4: to identify the possible role identities ANSAs may enact at the grand strategic and strategic levels, as a prelude to developing *a comprehensive typology of ANSA strategic roles*. First, three distinct role identities are distinguished at the grand strategic level:

- *Transformer*, in which the ANSA seeks to create alternative structures to supplant existing state and social institutions, that is, to fundamentally *remake* society.
- *Captor*, in which the ANSA seeks to take control of existing state structures and institutions—in other words, preserve the structures but *replace* the incumbents.
- *Stakeholder*, in which the ANSA accepts an arrangement in which the major players in a conflict *share* the power centres in the existing governance structure.

Next, we consider the roles ANSAs see themselves as playing at the strategic level. Regardless of their ideological bent, ANSAs generally regard themselves as the *vanguard*, defined as a group that appropriates or arrogates to itself a leadership role in creating or fomenting the conditions

necessary for socio-political change. Embedded within this overarching role identity is a second tier of strategic roles, each associated with its own characteristic expectations, norms, and behaviours: these generic role identities are *spoiler* and *partner*. In simple terms, a *spoiler* is an ANSA that sees peace as a threat and resorts to violence to undermine its prospects. A *partner*, on the other hand, is an ANSA that has made a strategic commitment to achieving peace in the long run (this does not necessarily mean that the ANSA will not resort to violence at various points along the bumpy road to that end-state). Combining the role identities at the grand strategic and strategic levels yields a comprehensive typology of 16 archetypical strategic roles that an ANSA may assume in the context of intergroup conflict.

In Section 5, we explore the range of strategies open to an ANSA in the performance of these strategic roles. Recall the classic strategic paradigm *strategy* = *ends* + *ways* + *means*. The *ends* of an ANSA's strategy may be either *destructive* or *constructive*: in general terms, destructive strategies seek to wear down or weaken the opponent, while constructive strategies aim to build up or strengthen the ANSA itself and the social group it claims to represent (as vanguard). Strategies are also distinguished on the basis of their *ways* and *means*, more specifically:

- *Violent Action*. Methods involving the actual or threatened use of force so as to inflict physical or psychological injury or harm to persons or material damage to property as a first-order effect.
- *Non-violent Action*. Methods refraining from the actual or threatened use of physical force but intended nevertheless to produce compelling psychological pressures on persons as a first-order effect.
- *Non-violent Co-option/Cooperation*. Methods refraining from the actual or threatened use of physical force but designed to neutralize, absorb, or win over persons as a first-order effect.

Combining *ends* and *ways/means* yields six feasible strategies. These independent strategies, in turn, may be blended to form 63 possible strategy combinations or sets. This substantiates the general observation that ANSAs have an extremely rich and varied strategic repertoire from which to choose.

Drawing all the strands of analysis together, we conclude with some final thoughts regarding the insufficiency of the stereotypical image of ANSAs. The basic message of this paper is not that we need to replace our narrow image of ANSAs in its entirety with that of a “kinder, gentler” ANSA.

But we do need a more nuanced understanding of these complex social actors or, more precisely, a better understanding of how these complex social actors *see themselves*. If we focus only on “the dark side” of ANSAs, we may miss the potential in these groups for moderation and accommodation (recall that, at one time, establishment politicians in the West—principally, members of Britain’s Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher—considered Nelson Mandela to be a “terrorist” [see Bevins & Streeter, 1996]). We have to be alert to any tendencies towards moderation in ANSAs that we might be able to cultivate, and to be sensitive to the danger that we may unwittingly short-circuit these tendencies through our own confrontational actions. If we’re not, we may miss fleeting opportunities, not to “pre-empt, dislocate and disrupt,” but to engage, reconcile, and include.

Our investigation of identities, roles, and strategies shows that there is more to ANSAs than our stereotypical “bad actor” image suggests. As we come to better understand the complexity of these social actors, we also come to the humbling realization that, from a human sciences standpoint, *pattern predictions* of the kind of strategic roles and strategies we might expect from ANSAs in a given situation is the best we can hope for (or provide to the CAF). The *precise prediction* of ANSA behaviour, akin to what is the norm in the physical sciences, is a prize that lies (forever?) beyond the reach of researchers in the human domain.

2 What is an ANSA?

Before delving into an exploration of identities, roles, and strategies, we must first address a basic question of terminology: what is an *Armed Non-state Actor* (ANSA)? In one respect, this is a unit of analysis question (for the distinction between *unit* and *level* of analysis, see Yurdusev, 1993). When we speak of ANSAs, to whom or what are we referring: individuals or groups? Somewhat confusingly, ANSA has been used in the literature to refer to both. Thus, it is incumbent upon analysts to specify the unit of analysis, whether individual or group, to which they are referring when using the term. Heeding this caution, the following section describes the derivation of a working definition for ANSA *at the group level*.

Our quest for a working definition starts from the premise that an ANSA is an *agent*, that is, a social actor with the capacity for purposeful action. An agent may be either an individual or a group, but, as mentioned above, for the purposes of this Project, the definition of ANSA will apply to groups only, while individuals will be referred to as *members* of ANSAs. A *group* is defined in general as “a number of individuals, defined by formal or informal criteria of membership, who share a feeling of unity or are bound together in relatively stable patterns of interaction” (Scott & Marshall, 2005, p. 257).² This shared “feeling of unity” or fraternity among members is a key feature of an ANSA. To adopt the term of political scientist Benedict Anderson (2006) in his seminal study on nationalism, an ANSA is an “imagined community” (see Box 1) in the sense that “in the minds of each [member] lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Although there is a “deep horizontal comradeship” (ibid., p. 7) among its members, it does not follow that an ANSA is a monolithic entity. Individuals, cliques, and factions may hold different interests, values, and beliefs that can come into conflict and, if too divergent, can paralyze group action and ultimately threaten group order and cohesion.

Groups may be characterized as *planned* or *emergent*. A *planned group* is one deliberately formed by its members or an external authority (Forsyth, 2006, p. 6) and includes traditional, vertically-structured organizations in which the hierarchical relationships among the constituent elements are formally or institutionally ordered, as well as horizontal networks in which autonomous cells loosely synchronize their actions with other cells on a more or less ad hoc basis.

² The term *group* also refers to aggregates or categories of individuals (e.g., social classes, demographic groups, etc.) who may not share a feeling of unity or engage in regular social interaction. Alternative definitions in the social science literature highlight different features of these social interactions, emphasizing, among others, the communicative, structural, psychological, and/or identity aspects of the group (see Forsyth, 2006, p. 4, Table 1–1, for a selection of definitions).

Box 1. What is an “Imagined Community”?

International studies professor Benedict Anderson introduced the notion of “imagined communities” in his seminal work on nationalism published in 1983. He described the “nation” as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6):

- “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”
- “The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations...No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.” [The implication here is that there is always an out-group to juxtapose against one’s own imagined community, for better or worse.]
- “It is imagined as *sovereign*...nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.”
- “It is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” [emphasis in original] (pp. 6, 7).

Though Anderson restricted his discussion to imaginings of the nation, the concept of imagined community applies equally well to other social groupings, both larger and smaller. Indeed, he observes that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (ibid., p. 6).

An *emergent group*, on the other hand, is a collection of individuals who come together spontaneously to act without prior arrangement (ibid.).³ In this respect, then, an ANSA should be regarded as a planned as opposed to an emergent group. A rioting crowd is not an ANSA, though members of an ANSA may participate in or, indeed, actively encourage the emergence of such a violent gathering.

Groups may be further distinguished as either *state* or *non-state actors*. In sociologist Max Weber’s (1919/1946) classic formulation, the feature that sets the state apart among the panoply of human communities is that it “(successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* [original emphasis] within a given territory” (para. 4). From time to time, the state may delegate the right to use force to other institutions or individuals, but it remains “the sole source” of this “right” (ibid.). Consistent with this conceptualization, *state actor* as used here refers to the group or groups that control the amalgam of power institutions—whether configured in a modern bureaucratic, feudal, tribal, or other structure—that people generally associate with the governance architecture within a particular territorial entity. A *non-state actor*, conversely, is simply a group that does not direct or control these institutions (regardless of whether or not they do, in fact, want to control them).

³ Advances in social media greatly facilitate the degree of coordination that can underlie seemingly “spontaneous” gatherings such as the pro-democracy demonstrations in Cairo’s Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring. As one Egyptian activist remarked, “We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world” (quoted in Howard, 2011).

Moving on to *armed* non-state actors specifically, many working definitions have been advanced for the term, a selection of which follows:

- “Groups that are armed and use force to achieve their objectives and are not under state control” (Petrasek, 2001, p. 5).
- “Armed groups that operate beyond state control” (Holmqvist, 2005, p. 45).
- “Any armed actor with a basic structure of command operating outside state control that uses force to achieve its political or allegedly political objectives” (Amberg, Pountney, Sjöberg, Sonderegger, & Zihlerl, 2005, p. 10).
- “Any identifiable group that uses armed methods, and is not within the formal structure of a recognized state” (Moser-Puangsuwan, 2007, p. 1, n. 1).

Note that these definitions, drawn largely from the humanitarian and human rights community, are policy prescriptive rather than scientific definitions. They define the actors with whom, it is argued, humanitarian organizations must engage on a practical level in order to achieve specific policy goals, such as negotiated access in war zones to permit the supply of humanitarian aid. The similarities in the above definitions are immediately apparent. More generally, definitions of ANSAs emphasize four characteristics (see Bruderlein, 2000, pp. 6–7; Glaser, 2003, pp. 20–22; Policzer, 2005, p. 6):

- A basic command structure.

An ANSA has a basic organizational coherence, with command structures ranging from loose decentralized structures (e.g., networks) to more rigid and centralized hierarchies. The key consideration here is the degree of control the command structure provides the leadership over the group, that is, whether it is sufficient to allow ANSA leaders to exercise a minimum level of restraint over the conduct of its fighters. With *al-Qaeda*’s (The Base—AQ) move from “corporate terrorism” to “terror franchises,” or the apparent shift of the global jihadist movement more broadly to what sociologist Marc Sagemann (2008) describes as “leaderless jihad,” it is open to question whether “a basic command structure” remains a necessary characteristic of ANSAs.

- The use of violence for political ends.

An ANSA uses violence as a means—though not necessarily the exclusive or primary means—to contest political power with governments, foreign powers, and/or other non-state actors (for a discussion of the functions of collective political violence more broadly, see Moore, 2011). The practical political agendas of ANSAs are as varied as the groups themselves. They may seek to protect or advance the interests of their clan, tribe, ethnic, or religious community within a national or transnational framework. They may seek to overthrow a government or occupation authority, or, more fundamentally, to foment revolutionary change of the national or international political system. They may seek to conquer and control a national territory, or to detach a component region therefrom. They may seek to preserve a status quo, or to return to a status quo ante that privileges their political, social, and/or economic position or that of the group they claim to represent. Regardless of the specific end-state, it is the *capacity*—that is, the capability and intention—to use violence to achieve political ends that is the main quality distinguishing an ANSA from other violent and non-violent groups.

Determining a group's capacity for political violence may not be as straightforward as it seems. Consider, for example, the radical Islamist group *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (The Party of Islamic Liberation—HT). HT is an international Islamic movement founded in 1953 by a Palestinian Islamic scholar and *shariah* appeal court judge Taqiuddin an-Nabhani. The group shares the same political goal as many violent jihadist groups: the reunification of the *ummah* or global Muslim community in a single, authentic Muslim state—the Caliphate. With an international network extending through more than 40 countries, a membership conservatively estimated at over one million, and a cellular underground structure reminiscent of that of the Russian Bolsheviks (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 317), the group is thought to have the *capability* for violence. But does it likewise have the *intent*?

HT publicly rejects violence and does not engage in terrorist attacks. However, Nixon Center Director for International Security and Energy Programs Zeyno Baran (2004), among others, sees its “rhetoric of democracy and...message of non-violence” as superficial (p. 1). She claims that the group has never condemned the violence of other jihadist groups, nor has it denounced terrorist attacks (ibid, p. 11). On this point, at least, Baran is wrong. HT condemned *Groupe Islamique Armé* (Armed Islamic Group—GIA) atrocities during the Algerian civil war (1992–2002), the 9/11 attacks, and the 7/7 attacks in Britain (though Baran cannot be faulted for not referring to the UK attacks since they came after the publication of her monograph) (for reference to the HT leaflets containing these condemnations, see “Banning non-violent Hizb-ut-Tahrir,” n.d.; please note that reference in this TM to the information contained in the petition

does not in any way imply approval of or support for the petition itself). Be that as it may, she continues,

In many ways, HT is part of an elegant division of labor. The group itself is active in the ideological preparation of the Muslims, while other organizations handle the planning and execution of terrorist attacks. Despite its objections to this description, HT today serves as a *de facto* conveyor belt for terrorists. (Baran, 2004, p. 11)

The UK government, for its part, does not share this simplistic “conveyor belt” view of HT. A “Restricted” document leaked to *The Sunday Telegraph* in 2010 entitled “Government strategy towards extremism” says,

It is sometimes argued that violent extremists have progressed to terrorism by way of a passing commitment to non-violent Islamist extremism, for example of a kind associated with al-Muhajiroun or Hizb ut Tahrir...We do not believe that it is accurate to regard radicalisation in this country as a linear ‘conveyor belt’ moving from grievance, through radicalisation, to violence ... This thesis seems to both misread the radicalisation process and to give undue weight to ideological factors. (quoted in Gilligan, 2010, para. 3).



Figure 5: Hizb ut Tahrir protestors.
Source: “Hizb ut Tahrir Wilayah Pakistan,” 2012.

Political scientist Emmanuel Karagiannis and social psychologist Clark McCauley (2006) provide a more sophisticated analysis of HT’s approach to political violence. They argue that “the content of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s ideology, which is based on a selective interpretation of Islamic theology and history, serves as a barrier to the adoption of violence as a method for the establishment of an Islamic state” (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 329). HT’s strategy, which has remained

essentially unchanged for over fifty years, consists of a three-stage action program emulating the progress of the Prophet Mohammed’s mission: (a) recruitment of the vanguard, (b) Islamization of society, and (c) establishment of the state and the spread of Islam through jihad (ibid., p. 318). HT sees itself as being in the second stage of the process, involving the peaceful

overthrow of existing Muslim regimes. The group's task is to persuade Muslim societies to embrace Islam, focusing particularly on the security forces since they are the ones who will execute the peaceful coups d'état that will depose the current regimes (ibid., p. 326). The war that HT fights in the second stage is for the hearts and minds of Muslims; it is not one fought on the battlefield. This is not to say that HT rejects violence *in toto*. In the third stage of the action plan, jihad is the method by which the reunified Muslim state spreads Islam throughout the world. However, only the Caliph can declare jihad; HT—or any other non-state group, in its view—cannot take it upon itself to make such a declaration. (However, resistance to foreign occupation, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the absence of Caliphal sanction is permitted.) In this sense, HT's conception of political violence is similar to the state-centric view of the West: violence sanctioned by the (Islamic) state is legitimate, while that engaged in without the authority of the state is terrorism (again, except in the face of foreign invasion of Muslim lands) (ibid., p. 328).

Karagiannis and McCauley (2006) speculate, however, that, under certain circumstances, HT and its followers might resort to violence. For example, the group could decide to deviate from the Prophet Mohammed's three-stage model. Alternatively, it could claim that matters have already moved to the third stage of jihad, for example, if a genuine Muslim leader should seize power in some state and credibly declare the re-establishment of the Caliphate. Repressive state action against the group, in particular the suppression or elimination of its leadership, could cause the movement to fracture, with break-away factions subsequently engaging in violence. Or, the group could align itself with the military in some country in a violent grab for power (ibid., pp. 329–330).

So, the question remains: Is Hizb-ut-Tahrir an ANSA? Should the group fall under our analytical microscope? Given the ambiguities in the group's ideology and strategy with respect to the use of violence, culminating in the fact that we cannot with confidence rule out the group's resort to such methods under certain circumstances, HT, arguably, should be considered an ANSA for analytical purposes.

Note the qualification "for analytical purposes." The term ANSA as used in this Project is not a policy prescriptive designation. Simply because a group is identified here as an ANSA does not necessarily imply that governments should take some form of suppressive counter-action against them. Those are decisions that must be based on a different kind of assessment from that undertaken in this Project; specifically, they must be rooted in an intelligence-based threat assessment. Here, we are only interested in advancing our understanding of the motivations and behaviours of a select (and relatively narrow) population of non-state actors. The term

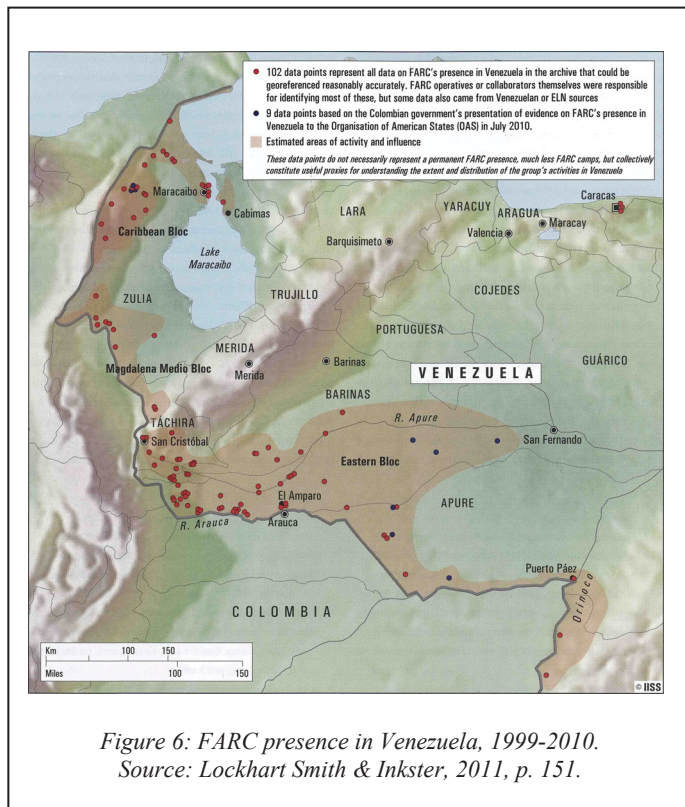
ANSA is used to identify that particular population of interest from a basic research rather than an operational law enforcement or national security standpoint.

- Autonomy from state control.

An ANSA not only exists outside the formal state institutional structure but retains the capacity for independent decision. In other words, it is an autonomous entity, not merely an appendage of a state or its security forces; it operates beyond the *responsible control* of governments (for more on the concept of responsible control, see Moore, 2006). While it may actively support and collaborate with a regime—and receive the regime’s support in return—this cooperation stems from a perceived coincidence of ANSA and state interests rather than as a response to superior orders.

The relationship between the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo* (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army, known as FARC–EP or FARC) and the Venezuelan regime of deceased President Hugo Chavez well illustrates this point. In May 2011, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published a 240-page dossier analyzing email communications and strategic documents found in eight computer data storage devices belonging to Luis Edgar Devía Silva (aka Raúl Reyes), one of seven members of FARC’s

leadership council (formally, the Secretariat) and the head of its International Committee (COMINTER) (Lockhart Smith & Inkster, 2011; reviewed in Romero, 2011). Reyes was killed and the electronic archive retrieved in a March 2008 Colombian military raid on a FARC camp across the border in Ecuador. The archive sheds light on the pragmatically cooperative but sometimes stormy relationship between FARC and the Venezuelan government. President Chavez saw the Colombian ANSA as a strategic ally in defending his Bolivarian Revolution



against US aggression, as well as a partner in creating a revolutionary bloc throughout the region. Accordingly, he allowed it to maintain support zones in the border regions with Colombia (see Figure 5) and promised it financial and other material support (though he often failed to deliver on these promises, much to the chagrin of FARC leaders). Despite a souring of relations in 2004, Chavez sought to reconcile with the group after an 18-month breach, an initiative that coincided with a marked downturn in relations with Bogotá. In return for Venezuelan support, FARC helped to train the regime's paramilitaries in guerrilla and urban warfare after the 2002 coup that briefly ousted Chavez from power. The archive also contains hints that FARC may have been asked to assassinate two of Chavez's domestic political opponents. Nevertheless, while willing to collaborate with Caracas to advance its own interests, FARC retained its operational independence. Based on his earlier analysis of the same Reyes documents, NEFA Senior Investigator Douglas Farah (2008) concluded that "the long-cordial relationship between the FARC and Chávez has grown from one of friendship to one of *allies and business partners* [emphasis added]," with "each side [using] the other to advance a particular agenda" (pp. 8, 16). In other words, FARC remained an independent partner—and not a mere cat's paw—of the Chavez regime.

- Some degree of territorial control.

An ANSA effectively controls a territory (not necessarily precisely delimited) and its resident population. This domination does not necessarily require a permanent, visible presence. The ANSA's presence may be intermittent and its control exercised through "hidden" agents embedded in the population (Glaser, 2003, p. 20).

These four defining characteristics are admittedly restrictive. They limit ANSAs to a subset of non-state actors that employ violence in social conflict settings and exclude criminal groups, state-controlled paramilitaries, and private security companies (PSCs)/private military companies (PMCs) among others. Nevertheless, these characteristics provide us with the basic elements needed to frame a working definition of ANSA:

An autonomously operating planned group that has the capacity to use violence to achieve political ends.

Note the territoriality requirement—that is, the extent to which an ANSA's aspirations and/or activities are tied to a particular territory—is eliminated so as to encompass transnational actors within the scope of the definition. Note also the added characteristic of "planned group," referred to previously, to differentiate ANSAs from spontaneous collections of individuals who come together in, say, street demonstrations or riots.

An ANSA is an autonomously operating planned group that has the capacity to use violence to achieve political ends.

International relations theorist Ulrich Schneckener (2009) adopts a similar definition to that presented here (pp. 8–9). Significantly, though, he does not limit ANSAs to the

pursuit of political ends, thereby including criminals, marauders and mercenaries, and PSCs/PMCs within his universe of ANSAs. We do not consider these groups to be ANSAs in the context of this Project, but include them within the broader category of *Violent Non-state Actors* (VNSAs). International relations specialist Kledja Mulaj (2009) defines VNSAs as “non-state armed groups that resort to organized violence as a tool to achieve their goals” (p. 3). These two terms, ANSA and VNSA, though similar, are not quite the same. Like Schneckener (2009), Mulaj does not qualify “goals” in her definition. Consequently, the term VNSA can apply to a wide variety of violent actors, such as criminal groups, militias, warlords, and others who pursue a wide range of goals beyond the strictly political. Given our restriction of ANSAs to the pursuit, in the main, of political goals, these groups logically constitute a sub-category of VNSAs.

Our use of ANSA as opposed to VNSA in the Project signifies our active interest in only a selection of the non-state actors found in the contemporary operating environment. Are ANSAs the only violent or potentially violent groups in the battle-space? Certainly not. Are they even the most important VNSAs in the operating environment? Not necessarily. Consider, for example, the current deadly situation in Mexico. In the southern state of Chiapas, the revolutionary leftist ANSA *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation—EZLN) launched an armed uprising against the Mexican government in 1994. Is this uprising the fountainhead of the widespread violence that has plagued Mexico for the past several years? The answer is no. Since its brief and abortive insurrection in the mid-1990s, the EZLN has focused its efforts primarily on non-violent means to draw national and international attention to its political demands. Rather, the responsibility for the deaths of over 50,000 people in Mexico over the last six years (“Q&A: Mexico’s drug-related violence,” 2012, para. 4) can be laid squarely on the doorstep of drug cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel and Los Zetas rather than the EZLN.

ANSAs are certainly a part of the complex equation in the battle-space, but, as the Mexican experience demonstrates, there are other violent groups who also populate that space. These other VNSAs do not fall into our working definition of ANSA, however, since they do not meet the basic requirements of autonomous decision-making and the use of violence for political ends. The label ANSA as conceived in this Project is not an umbrella term that encompasses every violent or potentially violent actor in a conflict space.

There is another reason why we prefer the term ANSA in this Project. Though, as Mulaj's (2009) definition makes clear, violence is *a* tool—and not necessarily *the* tool or *the only* tool—to which VNSAs resort, for those not schooled in the subtleties of the terminology (e.g., policymakers), “violent” non-state actor might give the mistaken impression that these groups are committed *exclusively and single-mindedly* to violence. This clouds the fact that not all ANSAs are hopelessly irreconcilable and can never under any circumstances change their goals or strategies, most especially, their resort to collective political violence. Hence our preference for the term *armed* NSA. Rather than an invariant strategy or an inherent trait, it suggests a potential or capacity for violence which these groups *may* tap into depending on the circumstances.

To reiterate, then, the term ANSA refers to politically-motivated armed groups or, in common parlance, insurgents, terrorists, freedom fighters, guerrillas, rebels, and the like. This immediately raises the question: Why not use these more common labels? Why insist upon a colourless term like ANSA? Apart from the difficulty in distinguishing between the types to which these labels refer, there is, quite simply, too much emotive baggage associated with their everyday use. In some cases, it may be positive as in *freedom fighter*, while in other cases

We need a neutral, analytical term that does not prejudice our assessment of groups through the labels assigned to them.

it may be negative as in *terrorist*. What we need is a neutral, analytical term that defines a slice of the actors in the social conflict space but does not prejudice the assessment of those actors through the terminology used. By using the term ANSA, we hope to avoid the biases associated with these other, more loaded labels.

Not only pregnant with prejudice, labels such as *insurgent* and *terrorist* obscure as much as they illuminate the nature of the groups of interest. Most, if not all, ANSAs represent hybrids of the amorphous, ill-defined types to which these labels refer. For example, a group may launch military strikes against state security forces at the same time as carrying out terrorist attacks against civilian targets, all the while relying on the profits from criminal activities (e.g., kidnapping, drug trafficking, armed robbery, etc.) to finance these acts of violence. The Afghan Taliban is a case in point. The majority of its military operations are conventional attacks (e.g., small arms fire, RPG attacks, etc.) directed against Afghan security and international military forces. (Improvised explosive device (IED) and indirect fire attacks rank second and third, respectively, in its tactical portfolio; Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, 2012, p. 6.) The group also deliberately targets civilians, in particular, those seen as supporting or collaborating with the Kabul regime or its coalition allies. In 2011, for example, IEDs, suicide bombings, and targeted



Figure 7: Taliban fighter guards poppy field. Source: Levy, 2011.

killings took the lives of 2,332 civilians, 77 percent of all civilian conflict-related deaths in that year (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2012, p. 1). To fund its campaign, the Taliban increasingly draws on earnings from criminal activities. The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates that 70% of the Taliban's operational funding comes from the opium trade, from taxing poppy farmers to guarding drug smugglers' shipments (Peters, 2009, p. 14). The money—with

estimates on the order of \$500 million in 2007 alone (ibid.)—is pulling the group ever deeper into the drug trade, in a process that former head of the counter-narcotics task force at the American embassy in Kabul Doug Wankal described as the “FARCification of the Taliban” (ibid., p. 13), in reference to the Colombian ANSA that likewise succumbed to the lure of profit in the cocaine trade. How should a group like the Taliban be classified? Is it an insurgent organization or a terrorist group? Is it even an ANSA at all, in light of its expanding criminal activities?

Moreover, an ANSA is a dynamic social entity whose nature may change over the course of a conflict. It may begin as an insurgent organization motivated to redress the perceived socio-economic and/or political grievance(s) of its primary group. However, as the conflict drags on, the initial motivation of grievance may fade as illicit economic opportunities for enrichment present themselves, and greed becomes the dominant motivation for carrying on the fight. The ANSA thus may metamorphose into a criminal organization, increasingly engaging in activities such as smuggling, extortion, blackmail, kidnapping, drug trafficking, illegal resource exploitation, etc., while abandoning its original political *raison d'être*.

Illustrative of this dynamic is the apparent transformation of the *Jaish al Mahdi* (Mahdi Army—JAM), the Shiite militia of Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Originally a nationalist militia that emerged in June 2003 in violent opposition to the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, it came to be seen among many Iraqi Shiites as their sole defender during the months of intense sectarian violence that followed the bombing of the Al ‘Askarī Mosque in Samarra in February 2006. However, as the threat from Sunni insurgents ebbed and the sectarian conflict subsided, the militia lapsed into criminality. Young militia members—lacking direction and control from senior

commanders swept up in American counterinsurgency dragnets—turned to dealing in protection, stolen cars, and property confiscated from dead or displaced Shiites as well as from Sunnis. Increasingly, many Shiites turned against them, criticizing the militia as “a band of street thugs without ideology” (Tavernise, 2007, para. 1).

JAM subsequently tried to move away from violence and criminality and to reinvent itself as a nonviolent social and cultural movement. In the summer of 2008, scant months after suffering a severe military setback in fighting in Basra and other areas of the south against Iraqi government and US forces, al-Sadr ordered the militia’s rank and file to lay down their weapons and join a new religious and cultural wing of the movement called the *Momahidoun* (“those who pave the way”). According to Sadrist leaders at the time, this organization would offer welfare services,

literacy programs, and courses in general Islamic teaching and ethics—open to all Iraqis regardless of sect or political affiliation—to counter the “culture of killing” that they said al-Qaeda had brought to Iraq (Peter, 2008, para. 12). The point to note here in this brief recounting of JAM’s apparent transformation is that ANSAs are not static social entities to which one may affix timeless labels such as insurgent, guerrilla, or terrorist. Indeed, they may not even continue as *armed* non-state actors, depending upon their response to changes in the social environment in which they operate and of which they are a product.

To sum up, then, evaluative labels—that is, terms that express some form of approval or, more often, disapproval of the group to which they are attached—commonly associated with ANSAs contribute little analytical value to the study of these groups. More often than not, these labels are used as weapons of political warfare that reflect more on the actors that employ them than on the groups they purport to describe. Not surprisingly, these politically-charged labels may change as circumstances change. For example, in the early years of the US occupation of Iraq, the US military loosely grouped together Sunni-sectarian ANSAs—including secular/ideological, tribal, and religious/Islamist groups—under the rubric of “insurgents,” “Anti-Iraq Forces” (AIF) or, in Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s graphic description, “dead-enders” (Kelley, 2003, para. 6). However, US terminology for these ANSAs changed dramatically when many of them turned



Figure 8: Mahdi Army. Source: “Mahdi Army,” 2005.

against *al-Qaeda in Iraq* (AQI) in 2006/2007 and began fighting alongside US forces (Bruno, 2009). Rather than insurgents, these former anti-coalition fighters were linguistically transformed into the “Sons of Iraq.” To avoid exposing our analysis to the vagaries of such political language, we will avoid as much as possible the use of emotive terms like *insurgent* and *terrorist* in favour of the more analytically neutral term ANSA.

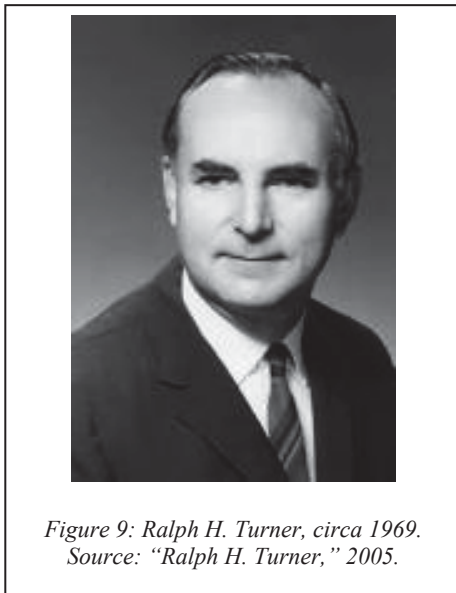
3 The Theoretical Approach: Role Theory

3.1 Introduction

In this Section, we set out the theoretical approach upon which the analysis is grounded: *role theory*, drawn from sociology and social psychology, with particular focus on *social roles* and *role identities*. This approach assumes that, in our day-to-day lives, individuals and groups—including ANSAs—act out multiple roles with which are associated sets of expectations, norms, and behaviours. Of these multiple roles, different ones are salient for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances. The question this raises when trying to understand ANSAs is when or under what conditions do particular role identities become more prominent than others for these groups, especially with respect to roles characterized by the resort to violence. And is it possible to “nudge” these groups away from these violent role identities towards those that shun violence as a means of resolving social conflict?

3.2 Social Roles and Role Identities

The approach taken here draws upon the intimate link between role and identity long recognized



in the human sciences. Sociologist Ralph Turner (1968) defines *social role* as “a comprehensive pattern of behavior and attitudes, constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of situations, which is socially identified—more or less clearly—as an entity” (p. 552). Turner’s is an inclusive definition stressing the *gestalt* character of social roles (Turner, 1990, p. 88, n. 1), that is, role as a perceptual pattern, structure, or configuration forming and functioning as a coherent, identifiable whole or unity greater than the mere sum of its parts. Roles should not be confused with positions. *Positions* (or *statuses*) are the relatively stable structural elements of organized social units—such as groups, organizations, etc.—with which more or

less regularized and distinctive activities, functions, duties, rights, and privileges are associated (Holsti, 1970, pp. 241–242). Roles, then, are the dynamic aspect of positions, “their associated rights and duties in action” (Stryker, 2002, p. 218). The difference between the two can be

summed up as follows: an individual or group *occupies a position* but *performs a role* (Turner, 1956, p. 317).

Some further remarks on roles.

First, the set of strategies defining a social role is not fixed or definite. In other words, roles are fuzzy. The role performer has available a suite or repertoire of strategies from which to draw, the

Social roles are comprehensive patterns of behavior and attitudes, constituting strategies for coping with recurrent sets of situations, which are socially identified—more or less clearly—as entities.

particular mix reflecting “the norms and expectations cultures, societies, institutions, or groups attach to particular *positions* [original emphasis]”—what political scientist Kal Holsti (1970) defines as *role prescriptions*—as well as the individual’s “own conception of his position and functions, and the [values, attitudes, and] behavior appropriate to them”—what Holsti calls *role conceptions* (p. 239). Thus, a given role, though generally distinguishable as such, may differ in its specifics among individuals and groups, and across circumstances.

In many instances, the goals and norms self-associated with a role (i.e., role conceptions) may be at odds with the values and expectations of society at large for the same role (i.e., role prescriptions). This is often the case with roles with which the use of violence is associated. As they enact their various roles, ANSAs must work to overcome this delegitimizing “shadow of violence” (Schlichte, 2009) and persuade others of the legitimacy of their role-related goals (at a minimum), if not necessarily of their strategies and methods. Indeed, this is one of the most difficult challenges ANSAs face in the competition for legitimacy in which they engage with the established authorities and their allies as well as with other non-state actors.

Further, roles are not unchanging over time; they are not carved in stone. They are dynamically and creatively constructed and reconstructed through the interaction of their occupants with individuals situated in other connected roles and counter-roles (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 265). For example, the role of teacher is constructed—and, indeed, only assumes meaning—through interaction with the counter-role of pupil.

Roles exist separately from their incumbents, representing “the accumulated experience of past occupants...shaped slowly as past generations adapt to environmental requirements” (Stryker, 2002, p. 217). Moreover, multiple roles may attach to a single position. In their study of freshman college students, for example, sociologists Sheldon Stryker and Richard Serpe (1994) operationalized five different roles—academic, athletic/recreational, extracurricular, friendship or

personal involvement (non-organizational), and dating—linked to the position of student (p. 20). In addition, a role (or set of roles) may be embedded in multiple groups, networks, and other social units that provide the context for the meaning and expectations attached to that role (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 289).

Turner (1990) identifies four types of social roles:

- “*Basic roles*, like gender and age roles, that are grounded in society at large rather than particular organizations;
- *Structural status roles*, like occupational, family, and recreational roles that are attached to position, office, or status in particular organizational settings;
- *Functional group roles*, like the “mediator” and “devil’s advocate,” which are not formally designated or attached to particular group positions or offices, but are recognized items in the cultural repertoire; and
- *Value roles*, like the hero, traitor, criminal, and saint, which embody the implementation or the negation of some recognized value or value complex.” (pp. 87–88)

The three latter role types are especially relevant to the study of ANSAs, at both the individual and group units of analysis. Structural status and functional group roles are critical to understanding the internal group dynamics of ANSAs. The value roles that ANSAs perform within the context of violent intergroup conflict—or present themselves as performing—are especially relevant. For instance, ANSAs often portray themselves as champions of the oppressed ethnic, religious, class, socio-cultural, or other group they purport to represent; the Bolshevik party, for example, cast itself as the vanguard of the working class (for more on the strategic role of *vanguard*, see Section 4.3.1).

Individuals and groups sequentially and concurrently enact multiple roles. Sometimes this leads to *role competition* or *role conflict*, when actions taken to fulfill the expectations associated with one role conflict with those necessary to satisfy another. This can result in cognitive discord and, in the extreme, behavioural paralysis. On the other hand, as sociologist Karen Lynch (2007) points out, individuals generally are able to cope with role overlap, role shuffling, and role switching as common facets of social life without becoming incapacitated (p. 380).

It is from these multiple roles that individuals derive their identity or, rather, identities. This leads us to the following proposition:

The social nature of individuals consists of a collection of self-definitions that they apply to themselves as a consequence of the many roles and counter-roles they perform [i.e., *role identities*]. (Hogg et al., 1995, pp. 256–257; Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 287)

These *role identities* provide individuals and, collectively, the group with self-meaning, answering the question “who am I?” in three ways:

- Through the distinctive and distinguishing rights, duties, privileges, and tasks attached to the structural positions which they occupy.
- Through the differentiation of the roles they enact from relevant counter-roles (e.g., the role of parent has no meaning apart from the counter-role of child).
- Through others’ responses to one’s roles, that is, the positive and negative cues others provide on the individual’s or group’s role performance over the course of ongoing social interaction.

Role identities are the self-definitions individuals apply to themselves in terms of the social roles they hold and enact.

The key in all this is the multifaceted nature of the individual or group self-concept emerging from the many and varied roles played in society. Indeed,

an actor has “as many identities as distinct sets of social relations in which they occupy a position and play a role” (Stryker, 2002, p. 227). There is an essential duality to these role identities as reflected in the compound structure of the term itself: “Role is external; it is linked to social positions within the social structure. Identity is internal, consisting of internalized meanings and expectations associated with a role” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 289).

Role identity feeds into an individual’s or group’s *self-concept*, “the relatively stable mental template that each of us has that forms the backdrop or self-context for having effective commerce with our social environment” (Taylor, 2002, p. 34). In simple terms, role identity implies that “you are what you do.” Consider, for example, the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Workers’ Party—PKK). The name of this ANSA explicitly conveys the group’s self-identification in terms of two social categories: national or ethnic (“Kurdistan”), and class (“Workers”). These social identities, however, are intertwined with the two roles the PKK sees itself as performing: (a) as a revolutionary socialist vanguard, and (b) as a modern national liberation movement. In other words, the PKK defines itself in terms of its self-appointed leading role in the Kurdish national liberation struggle against Turkish “colonialism” as well as in the

broader democratic class struggle against “oppression and exploitation” (Kurdistan Workers Party, 1995).

As this example suggests, role identities are especially important in understanding the motivations and behaviours of ANSAs. These internalized meanings and expectations are generally shared among members of a group, though not necessarily rigidly or unanimously in all respects. Indeed, they may be actively contested among the group’s members, cliques, and factions, which, in the extreme, may lead to the break-up of the group. Nor are these role identities always logical or internally consistent, being the kaleidoscopic products of history, memory, and socialization. Importantly, not all roles are equally available to a group. Role identities define the group’s feasible set of social roles. In this respect, they are both prescriptive and proscriptive: they affect what roles a group believes it can and cannot enact. They also influence the process and style of performance of the group’s self-defined roles (Krotz, 2002, pp. 8–9).

These role identities are not, however, just a confused hodge-podge. Rather, they are arranged relative to each other in a hierarchical structure based on some ordering principle. One such organizing principle is *identity salience*, the probability that a given role identity will be invoked in a given situation or series of situations and will form the basis for subsequent behavioural choice (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 257; Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). In other words, identity salience refers to the trans-situational relevance or applicability of a given role identity. This is not the only possible organizing principle that can be used to structure multiple role identities. Sociologist Morris Rosenberg (1979), for example, draws attention to the principle of *psychological centrality*, the self-attributed importance of various social identities to the individual (pp. 18–19, 73–75) (see Stryker & Serpe, 1994, pp. 33–34 contrasting these two organizing principles). Three general points should be noted concerning the salience hierarchy:

- The more likely a particular role identity will carry across situations—that is, the more salient the role identity—the higher it appears in the hierarchy.
- The individual’s or group’s salience hierarchy and the identities that form it are assumed to be relatively stable (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 265; Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286), thereby lending a degree of predictability to behavioural choices.
- Two or more role identities may be located at the same rank within the hierarchy (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 17, n. 1). This can confront the individual or group with a dilemma, especially when role identities of equivalent saliency recommend conflicting courses of action.

The key point to take from all this is that different roles can be salient for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances. This raises an important question when studying ANSAs: When or under what conditions does one role or mix of roles become more prominent than others for an ANSA? In particular, under what circumstances will an ANSA adopt—or renounce—strategic roles characterized by resort to collective political violence? Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to do more than highlight the importance of these questions. Nevertheless, they certainly are deserving of more in-depth investigation in any follow-on project.

To sum up, then, in order to better understand ANSAs, we must be mindful of their perceptions of the role(s) they play within society, that is, their role identities. But, what are some of these role identities? That is the question to which the discussion now moves.

Different roles can be salient for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances.

4 ANSA Roles in Intergroup Conflicts

4.1 Introduction

Having set out the theoretical approach of the analysis, the next task is to establish the range of strategic roles open to ANSAs. That is the purpose of this Section: to identify the possible role identities ANSAs may enact at the grand strategic and strategic levels, as a prelude to developing *a comprehensive typology of ANSA strategic roles*. First, we distinguish three distinct role identities at the grand strategic level: (a) *transformer*, (b) *captor*, and (c) *stakeholder*. Next, we consider the roles ANSAs see themselves as playing at the strategic level. Regardless of their ideological bent, ANSAs generally regard themselves as the *vanguard*, defined as a group that appropriates or arrogates to itself a leadership role in creating or fomenting the conditions necessary for socio-political change. Embedded within this overarching role identity is a second tier of strategic roles, each associated with its own characteristic expectations, norms, and behaviours: these generic role identities are *spoiler* and *partner*. In simple terms, a *spoiler* is an ANSA that sees peace as a threat and resorts to violence to undermine its prospects. A *partner*, on the other hand, is an ANSA that has made a strategic commitment to achieving peace in the long run (this does not necessarily mean that the ANSA will not resort to violence at various points along the bumpy road to that end-state). Combining the role identities at the grand strategic and strategic levels yields a comprehensive typology of *16 archetypical strategic roles* that an ANSA may assume in the context of intergroup conflict.

4.2 Grand Strategic Roles: Transformers, Captors, and Stakeholders

Let us begin with the specific roles ANSAs may perform at the higher grand strategic level. First, a qualifying note. Not every ANSA will enact one of these roles at all times and in all circumstances, nor, if it does, enact the role in precisely the same way as other ANSAs. Many ANSAs lack a clear and coherent grand strategic or even strategic vision, essentially making it up as they go along, groping their way towards a nebulous political end-state. With this in mind, we can identify at least three roles ANSAs potentially may perform at the grand strategic level:

- *Transformer*, in which the ANSA seeks to create alternative structures to supplant existing state and social institutions. It sweeps aside the institutional structure of the *ancien régime* and substitutes its own idiosyncratic structures. In other words, it seeks to fundamentally remake society. This is most often associated with social and political revolution, for

example, the Chinese civil war (1927–1949) in which Mao Zedung’s Communist Party eventually chased the ruling Kuomintang government from the mainland and imposed a radical communist system on Chinese society.

- *Captor*, in which the ANSA seeks to take control of existing state structures and institutions—in other words, to preserve the structures but replace the incumbents. This is most often associated with a coup d’état, for example, the 1954 Guatemalan coup in which the “Liberation Army” of Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, a rag-tag ANSA of some 400 fighters operating out of neighbouring Honduras and El Salvador—with indispensable covert and overt support from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—ousted the democratically-elected president, Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán.
- *Stakeholder*, in which the ANSA is willing to share in existing state structures and institutions, that is, to accept a parceling out of the power centres in the existing governance structures among the major players in a conflict. This is most often associated with power-sharing arrangements such as the Good Friday Accord (1998) that divided up the ministries of the interim administration in Northern Ireland between Sinn Fein and the Protestant parties.

To elaborate further on ANSAs’ grand strategic roles, where would we locate, say, al-Qaeda (AQ) in this simple typology? Certainly, it is safe to assume that AQ is not—and has no intention of becoming—a Stakeholder. However, is it a Transformer or a Captor? Some might argue that it is, in fact, neither, that AQ stands apart from these conventional grand strategic roles and sees itself, rather, in the role of *cosmic warrior*. The term *cosmic war*, first coined by religious studies

Transformers remake; Captors replace; and Stakeholders share.

academic Mark Juergensmeyer (2003), refers to a “war of the imagination” (Aslan, 2010, p. 7), a Manichean conflict between good and evil that cannot be won in any

meaningful sense. The warriors in this cosmic battle know that their ultimate goal—global transformation—is beyond their grasp. But, as sociology of religion scholar Reza Aslan (2010) writes, that is “the purpose and power of cosmic war: it provides hope for victory when none exists. All the cosmic warrior need do is *forget something called “this world”* [original emphasis] and focus his sights on the world beyond” (p. 8).

Aslan (2010) notes that the cosmic warriors responsible for 9/11 cite a litany of this-world grievances to justify their jihad: Palestinian suffering, US support for authoritarian Arab regimes, and the presence of foreign troops in Muslim lands. But for jihadists these grievances, whatever their legitimacy, are more symbolic than real: “they are not policies to be addressed or problems

to be solved but abstract ideas to rally around” (Aslan, 2010, p. 7). AQ recognizes that its objectives are impossible to achieve in this life, that it is “incapable of erasing all borders and re-establishing a worldwide Caliphate [the Transformer role]. It will never seize control over the Arab and Muslim world [the Captor role]. It cannot defeat the United States, let alone dispel its influence from the region. It has no hope of ‘wiping Israel off the map’” (ibid.).

While it is hard to argue with Aslan’s judgment that AQ’s goals are “absurd ambitions” (ibid.), he tends to overstate the other-worldliness of its grand strategic vision. Though AQ has not spelled out in any coherent sense the precise socio-political character of its desired end-state—the Global Muslim Caliphate—that is not a failing unique to this group; many revolutionary organizations past and present are guilty of hazy thinking about the new world order they ultimately hope to impose. Nor does it follow that AQ shares Aslan’s opinion of the “sheer lunacy” of its ambitions (ibid.). Indeed, as reflected in its End of Time strategy, AQ has charted a step by step path that its adherents believe will lead to the transformation of the existing state system (see the brief discussion of AQ’s global strategy in Section 4.3.2, p. 59). AQ’s grand strategic vision is certainly of this world—whether it is realistic or not is another question entirely—though undeniably tinted (or tainted) with shades of cosmic war.

AQ’s grand strategic vision is that of a revolutionary Transformer with a heavy shading of the Cosmic Warrior.

This duality is best captured in the following excerpt from an interview with then AQ second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, on the 4th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, released on jihadist websites in December 2005. At one point in the interview, he waxes philosophical on the cosmic nature of jihad:

Jihad in the path of Allah is greater than any individual or organization. It is a struggle between Truth and Falsehood, until Allah Almighty inherits the earth and those who live on it. Mullah Muhammad Omar and Sheikh Osama bin Laden are merely two soldiers of Islam in the journey of *jihad*, while the struggle between Truth and Falsehood transcends time. (al-Zawahiri, 2005/2007, p. 182)

In the very next instant, he rails against the down-to-earth problem of the alleged theft of the Muslim world’s oil, the quintessential resource of the modern, industrial world:

I call upon the *mujahidin* to focus their campaigns on the stolen petroleum of the Muslims. Most of its revenue goes to the enemies of Islam, and what’s left [behind] is

plundered by the thieves who rule our countries. *This is the greatest theft in the history of mankind* [original emphasis]. The enemies of Islam are consuming this vital resource with unparalleled greed. It is incumbent upon us to stop this theft any way we can, in order to save this resource for the sake of the Muslim *umma*. (ibid.)

As Zawahiri's comments reveal, while AQ is attuned to the transcendental dimension of its struggle, it certainly has not forgotten that this conflict plays out in the material world. On this basis, we would categorize AQ's grand strategic vision as that of a revolutionary Transformer with a heavy shading of the Cosmic Warrior.

4.3 Strategic Roles: Vanguard, Spoilers, and Partners

4.3.1 Vanguard

What roles do ANSAs see themselves as playing at the strategic level? Arguably, the role identity at the apex of an ANSA's identity salience hierarchy is that of *vanguard*. The concept of *vanguard* can be defined as a group that appropriates or arrogates to itself the leadership role in creating or fomenting the conditions necessary for socio-political change. In this role conception, the members of the group see themselves as the advance guard, the elite cadre, or the foremost element of the people they claim to represent (for more on vanguard parties, see Mandel, 1983; Mahoney, 2009; Moriarity, 2010).

The Western notion of the vanguard has its roots in Marxist-Leninist thought. Marx and Engels first introduced this construct in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). They argued that Communists are "the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1969, p. 22).

Some fifty years later, Lenin elaborated further on this strategic role. He set out the organizational and functional blueprint for a revolutionary vanguard organization in his 1902 pamphlet *What is to be done?* (Gouldner, 1978, p. 156). According to Lenin (1902/1961), the vanguard party consists of a core of dedicated professional revolutionaries, a small cadre of "wise men" who represent the finest elements of the revolutionary working class, "professionally engaged in revolutionary activity...[and]...professionally trained in the art of combating the political police" (c. IV). By virtue of their abilities, training, and experience, they are entitled—indeed, obliged—to organize and direct the political struggle of the masses and other oppositional forces: "not only are we *able*,

but it is our bounden duty, to guide *these* ‘activities of the various opposition strata’ [towards the overthrow of autocracy], if we desire to be the ‘vanguard’ [original emphasis]” (ibid., c. III). Without this core of professional leaders, the revolutionary movement cannot survive.

However, Lenin continues, the vanguard party cannot simply assert its right to a leadership role: “it is not enough to call ourselves the ‘vanguard’, the advanced contingent; we must act in such a

The vanguard is a group that appropriates or arrogates to itself the leadership role in creating or fomenting the conditions necessary for socio-political change.

way that all the other contingents recognise and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard” (ibid.). Lenin’s (1902/1961) role conception of the vanguard goes beyond merely “the

negative [original emphasis] role of exposers of abuses” (ibid.). The vanguard party must work to raise the socialist consciousness of the masses. Repeating the “profoundly true and important words” of Austrian Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, Lenin maintains that the vanguard party must “imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the proletariat) with the *consciousness* [original emphasis] of its position and the consciousness of its task” (Kautsky, quoted in ibid., c. II). The vanguard’s critical role in awakening the political consciousness of the working class is necessary given that the masses are unable to spontaneously develop a socialist consciousness on their own: “*spontaneous* [original emphasis] development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology...for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism...and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie” (ibid.). Without the direction and ideological guidance of the vanguard party, the class struggle of the masses is scattered and unfocused, and, ultimately, ineffective. As sociologist Alvin Gouldner (1978) writes with respect to “revolutions that overturn states[,]...without the intellectuals and the vanguard, there may be ‘mutinous’ local armies, even bandit armies, and there may be ‘rebellion,’ but there is no revolution at the national level that succeeds in [winning state power and] making a major property transfer” (p. 161).

The foregoing highlights the importance of ideology and ideological proselytizing (i.e., the instigator role, see Mandel, 2010) in the Leninist role conception of the vanguard. Ideology is indispensable as a guide for action for all such parties, especially socialist-oriented ones. As Lenin (1902/1961) writes, “the *role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory* [original emphasis]” (c. I). Moreover, it is the “public availability” of its doctrine and ideology (as opposed to its organization or membership) that distinguishes the modern vanguard organization from “a ritualistic, oath-bound secret society [like, say, the Free

Masons]...[with its] ‘secret doctrines’ known only to an elite in the organization” (Gouldner, 1978, p. 156).

From this cursory overview of the classical Marxist-Leninist conception of the vanguard role, two key features attached to this role emerge:

- The members of the vanguard party see themselves as the elite—the cream of the crop—of the primary group they claim to represent, by virtue of their character and conduct as well as their superior consciousness and understanding of contemporary political realities and the broader tides of history.
- As such, they see it as falling to them to awaken the consciousness and to mobilize, organize, guide, and direct the inchoate impulses of the primary group. They and the vanguard party of which they are a part have the right and the duty to assume the leadership role of the revolutionary struggle.

Not surprisingly, given their ideological bent, revolutionary leftist ANSAs in the post-Cold War world naturally see themselves in this vanguard role, despite—or, possibly, because of—the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The radical Maoist *Partido Comunista del Perú* (Communist Party of Peru—PCP, nicknamed *Sendero Luminoso* or the Shining Path and, hence, often referred to as PCP-SL), for example, styles itself as “the organized vanguard of the proletariat, the leadership and guarantee of the Peruvian Revolution, axis and center of all revolutionary construction, sustained by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, [and] Gonzalo Thought” (Peru People’s Movement, 1999, para. 5). (Gonzalo Thought is the neo-Maoist ideology of the Shining Path’s charismatic leader, Abimael Guzmán, seen by party members as “the fourth sword of Marxism.”) However, the vanguard role is not the exclusive domain of avowedly Marxist-Leninist parties. Marxist theoretician Régis Debray attributes the following observations to Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro,

that there is no revolution without a revolutionary vanguard: *that this vanguard is not necessarily the Marxist-Leninist party* [the traditional Latin American communist parties under Moscow’s heavy influence during the Cold War], *and that those who want to make the revolution have the right and the duty to constitute themselves a vanguard, independently of those parties* [original emphasis]. (quoted in Aguilar, 2003, p. 76)

Castro’s remarks remain relevant today, though not in the sense he originally intended. Indeed, the contemporary revolutionary vanguard parties of greatest concern to the West are not those on the Left but rather the global jihadist ANSAs. And, as we shall see, the Leninist role conception of

vanguard has infiltrated Salafist-jihadi thought, reinforcing the traditional Islamic notion of vanguard to become a cornerstone in the ideology of jihadist ANSAs like al-Qaeda.

The role identity of vanguard is not foreign to Islam. In the commentary to his English-language translation of the Qur'an, 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934/2001) describes the vanguard thus:

The vanguard of Islam—those in the first rank—are those who dare and suffer for the Cause and never flinch. The first historical examples are the *Muhājirs* [lit. “emigrants”] and the *Ansār* [lit. “helpers”]. The *Muhājirs*—those who forsook their homes in Makkah [Mecca] and migrated to Madīnah [Medina], the Holy Prophet being among the last to leave the post of danger, are mentioned first. Then come the *Ansār*, the Helpers, the citizens of Madinah who invited them, welcomed them and gave them aid, and who formed the pivot of the new Community. (p. 467, n. 1348)

However, the vanguard is not merely an artifact of early Islamic history. In his commentary on the same verse, Qur'anic translator Muhammad Asad (1980) elaborates on the timeless spiritual meaning the constituent terms *Muhājirs* and *Ansār* take on in the Qur'an, the first describing those who morally “forsake the domain of evil” and the second those who “shelter and succour the Faith” (pp. 268–269, fn. 132); in contemporary terms, the former roughly corresponds to the activist and militant members of an ANSA and the latter to the group's non-member supporters and sympathizers. In other words, the vanguard is not confined to the early years of the Islamic community in Medina; the vanguard of Islam can exist at any time or in any place.

Subsequent Islamist writers grafted Marxist-Leninist notions of the vanguard on to the traditional conception found in the Qur'an. One can trace the appearance of the vanguard role in 20th century Islamist thought to the writings of Mawlana Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, a Pakistani Muslim activist who founded the *Jama'at-e-Islami* (Islamic Party—JI), a fundamentalist political organization of which he was elected Amir in 1941. He became one of the most influential thinkers in the Islamic revival of the 20th century. Mawdudi's transformative vision of Islam drew heavily from modernist ideas including Communist political philosophy, seizing upon, for example, the Leninist model of the vanguard party as the exemplar for JI. As international relations scholar Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (1994) observes,

[the] similarity between the two movements is not just conjectural. Mawdudi was familiar with Communist literature, and true to his style, he learned from it, and from the Communist movement in India, especially in Hyderabad, in the 1930s and in the 1940s...That the Jama'at's and Lenin's ideas about the “organizational weapon” [i.e., the

vanguard party] were similar [though not identical in important respects, as Nasr notes elsewhere] confirms that the relation of ideology to social action in Mawdudi's works closely followed the Leninist example. Mawdudi argued that in order for his interpretation of Islam to grow roots and support an Islamic movement he had to form a tightly knit party. An organizational weapon was therefore the prerequisite to making Islam into an ideology and using religion as an agent for change. (p. 14)

Mawdudi's influence on subsequent generations of Islamic revivalist thinkers was profound (Nasr, 1996, pp. 3–4). Of particular interest here is his notion of the vanguard role, adapted from Leninism, and the chain of transmission of this idea from Mawdudi's writings to the pronouncements of Osama bin Laden, the deceased leader of al-Qaeda.

Sayyid Qutb, the leading thinker of the Egyptian *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (The Society of the Muslim Brothers or the Muslim Brotherhood—MB) in the 1950s and 1960s, was a follower of Mawdudi's teachings. Historian Philip Jenkins

The Leninist role conception of vanguard has infiltrated Salafist-jihadi thought, reinforcing the traditional Islamic notion of vanguard to become a cornerstone in the ideology of jihadist ANSAs like al-Qaeda.

(2008) notes that Qutb “loved the heroic image of the Islamist party as revolutionary vanguard” (para. 10). In his manifesto for Islamic action, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones), Qutb (1964/2005) described the conflict between the vanguard of the Islamic movement and *jahiliyya*—“the state of ignorance of the guidance from God” (p. 5)—in the following terms: “history tells us that the *jahili* society chooses to fight and not to make peace, attacking the vanguard of Islam at its very inception, whether it be a few individuals or whether it be groups, and even after this vanguard has become a well-established community” (p. 52). As historians Ladan and Roya Boroumand (2002) remark, “this was Leninism in Islamist dress” (p. 8).

Qutb's ideas on the vanguard, in turn, served as inspiration for succeeding generations of Islamic militants. Of particular note was the Palestinian Islamic scholar Abdullah Azzam. Qutb was one of the key influences on Azzam's thought, along with medieval Arab scholar Ibn Taymiyah and the ideologue of the radical Egyptian *Tanzim al-Jihad* (Egyptian Islamic Jihad—EIJ) group, Muhammad Faraj (McGregor, 2003, p. 92). While studying *shari'a* and Islamic jurisprudence at Cairo's Al-Azhar University in the early 1970s, Azzam met with Omar Abdel-Rahman (known as the “Blind Sheikh,” sentenced to life in prison in the US for seditious conspiracy in the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Center), Ayman al-Zawahiri (Osama bin Laden's successor as leader of AQ) and other followers of Qutb. This exposure led him to embrace much of Qutb's

ideology, including the concept of the Islamic movement and the vanguard. During the jihad against Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan, Azzam spoke of the continuing need for an Islamist vanguard, a kind of Islamic “rapid reaction force” (Gunaratna, 2005, p. 61), to come to the defence of oppressed Muslims everywhere even after the Afghan jihad had ended:

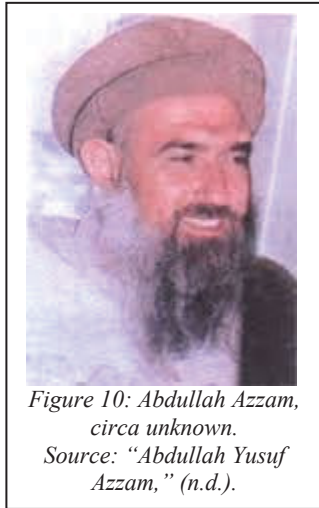


Figure 10: Abdullah Azzam, circa unknown.
Source: “Abdullah Yusuf Azzam,” (n.d.).

Every principle needs a vanguard (*Tali`ah*) to carry it forward and, while forcing its way into society, puts up with heavy tasks and enormous sacrifices. There is no ideology, neither earthly nor heavenly, that does not require such a vanguard that gives everything it possesses in order to achieve victory for this ideology. It carries the flag all along the sheer endless and difficult path until it reaches its destination in the reality of life, since Allah has destined that it should make it and manifest itself. This vanguard constitutes the solid base (*Al-Qa`idah al-Sulbah*) for the expected society. (quoted in Paz, 2002, “Supplement no. 1,” para. 1)

Azzam saw the role of this vanguard organization as mobilizing Muslims through “a common people’s jihad” (Azzam, 1987/2002, “6. Establishing a solid foundation,” para. 1). In this sense, *al-Qa`idah al-Sulbah* would act “like any revolutionary vanguard, as Lenin or indeed the French revolutionaries had imagined” (Burke, 2003, para. 14).

Azzam’s Qutbist ideas, in turn, helped mold the mindset of Osama bin Laden and laid the groundwork for the subsequent rise of al-Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 4).⁴ Azzam befriended the young bin Laden in the early 1980s while lecturing at King Abdulaziz University (Coll, 2008, p. 253), a relationship that carried over to their time in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s. He became bin Laden’s spiritual and intellectual mentor: “Bin Laden revered Azzam, who provided a model for the man he would become,” a modern version of the warrior-priest, an archetype of long standing in the Islamic tradition (Wright, 2006, p. 109–110, 111).

Azzam’s role conception of the vanguard permeated bin Laden’s and his lieutenants’ vision of al-Qaeda. As a vanguard organization, bin Laden saw AQ as standing at the forefront of the Islamic community’s struggle against the global forces of heresy and apostasy. (This is reflected in the

⁴ Apart from his personal links to Azzam, bin Laden was exposed to Qutb’s writings through his own readings and through his regular attendance at weekly public lectures given by Qutb’s brother, Muhammed, at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia (Wright, 2006, p. 79).

title of an online magazine published by AQ's central leadership: *Talae' Khurasan* or "The Vanguard of Khurasan.") For example, in statements on the 9/11 attacks, he referred to the terrorist perpetrators as the "vanguards of Islam" (U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2004, p. 183) and the "mujahid vanguards" (ibid., p. 224). In pontificating on the roots of the conflict between the Saudi regime and the Saudi people in an audio-cassette tape released in December 2004, he argued that "this conflict is partly a local conflict, but in other respects it is a conflict between world heresy—and with it today's apostates—under the leadership of America on the one hand, and on the other, the Islamic nation with the brigades of mujahideen in its vanguard" (Middle East Media Research Institute, 2004, para. 9). When asked in a December 2007 video interview what had been the most important transformation recently witnessed in the Islamic world, bin Laden's second-in-command and later successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, replied

The most important and critical of these transformations—and Allah knows best—is the emergence of the Mujahid vanguard of the Muslim Ummah as a power imposing itself on the world stage, as a result of the intensifying Jihadi awakening surging through the Islamic world, refusing humiliation, defending the honor of the Muslim Ummah and rejecting the methodologies of defeat and culture of backtracking. And the groups of this Mujahid vanguard are now uniformly deployed and – by the grace of Allah – are coming together and uniting. (IntelCenter, 2008, p. 343)

Surveying these and other statements over a ten-year period, Christopher Blanchard (2004), a US Congressional Research Service analyst, concludes that

[overall], Bin Laden's statements from the mid-1990s through the present indicate that he continues to see himself and his followers as the vanguard of an international Islamic movement primarily committed to ending U.S. "interference" in the affairs of Islamic countries and supportive of efforts to overturn and recast Islamic societies according to narrow Salafist interpretations of Islam and Islamic law. (p. CRS-6)

Thus, we see from the foregoing how the historical Marxist-Leninist strategic role conception of the vanguard party, melded with the traditional Islamic notion of vanguard, came to take root in the radical ideology of al-Qaeda in the present day.

4.3.2 Spoilers and Partners

The notion of the vanguard, we argued above, is the preeminent strategic role that ANSAs—whether militant leftist, religious, nationalist, or other—generally see themselves as playing.

However, embedded within this overarching role is a second tier of strategic roles, each associated with its own characteristic expectations, norms, and behaviours. What are some of these possible second-tier strategic roles?

The Spoiler Typology

One strategic role we can readily identify is that of *spoiler*. The seminal article introducing this role is Stephan Stedman's "Spoiler problems in peace processes," appearing in the journal *International Security* in 1997. In this article, Stedman goes well beyond a discussion of spoiler as a strategic role. He elaborates a provisional "typological theory of spoiler management" (Stedman, 1997, p. 6). He argues that the creation of a classification scheme to help international "custodians of peace" (ibid.) correctly diagnose spoiler type is only the first step on the path to helping them choose effective strategies to manage spoilers and keep the implementation of peace settlements on track. We are concerned here, however, only with his spoiler typology.⁵ Though important, it is beyond the scope of this paper to critically examine the links he draws between spoiler type and the strategy choices of peace custodians.

Stedman (1997) defines *spoilers* as "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it" (p. 5). The precondition for a spoiler role, Stedman maintains, is the existence of a peace process, which is said to exist once "at least two warring parties have committed themselves publicly to a pact or have signed a comprehensive peace agreement" (ibid., p. 7). As an example, he cites

the Cambodian peace process, which, despite four years of tortuous negotiations with intensive UN mediation, did not begin, in his view, until

A spoiler is a social actor who believes that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and uses violence to undermine attempts to achieve it."

the four factions—the Khmer Rouge, the republicans, and royalists (the three aligned in an uncomfortable anti-government coalition), and the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)—formally committed themselves to the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991 (ibid., p. 7, n. 4). Within the context of a peace process, spoilers play the role of "destroyers of peace agreements" (Stedman, 2003, p. 106).

⁵ A *typology* is a multidimensional *conceptual* classification. It is not a *taxonomy*—a classification of *empirical* entities—though these two terms are often used interchangeably (and incorrectly). The entries in a typology table's cells represent *types* or *type concepts* rather than empirical cases (Bailey, 1994, pp. 4–6). A typology, then, is "the prerequisite for theorizing...a foundation for explanation. Theory cannot explain [or predict] much if it is based on an inadequate system of classification" (ibid., p. 15).

In his preliminary typology, Stedman (1997) differentiates spoilers along four dimensions: (a) their standing or position in relation to the peace process, (b) the number of spoilers, (c) the type of spoiler, and, finally, (d) the locus of spoiler behaviour (p. 8). Only the first and third dimensions are relevant to the elaboration of his descriptive typology. The number of spoilers (the second dimension) draws attention to the complexity of the peace custodian's management problem, but it has no bearing on the characterization of spoiler type. The locus of spoiler behaviour within the group (the fourth dimension)—whether residing with the group's leaders or followers—bears upon the dynamics of change in spoiler type. However, on that question of spoiler change, Stedman briefly touches on only one case: the possibility of a *total spoiler* becoming a *limited spoiler*. He does not discuss the remaining theoretical cases (e.g., a total spoiler becoming a *greedy spoiler*, a greedy spoiler becoming a limited spoiler, etc.) so we cannot draw any generalizations that would make locus of spoiling behaviour a defining characteristic of spoiler type.

In terms of the first dimension—a spoiler's standing in relation to the peace process—Stedman (1997) notes that a spoiler may be either *outside* or *inside* the process. An *outside spoiler* operates external to the process, whether by choice or deliberate exclusion by other parties, and stands in implacable violent opposition to it. It strives for maximalist goals, that is, to dominate the political structures of the state. An *inside spoiler*, on the other hand, operates from within the peace process, formally committing to a peace accord and its implementation while at the same time duplicitously reneging on its obligations under that accord. They pursue what Newman and Richmond (2006) refer to as “devious objectives” under cover of their participation in the peace process: “achieving time to regroup and reorganize; internationalizing the conflict; profiting materially from ongoing conflict; legitimizing their negotiating positions and current status; and avoiding costly concessions by prolonging the process itself” (p. 4). Inside spoilers tend to minimize violence so as not to completely destroy their credibility as a partner in peace and to lose the advantages over their adversaries surreptitiously derived from continued participation in the process. In other words, they pursue a *strategy of stealth* or deliberate *strategic deception*. Many commentators have argued that PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was just such an inside spoiler, publicly professing his commitment to the Oslo Accords while refusing to fulfill his obligations under those agreements to fight terror and, in fact, encouraging terrorist violence against Israel behind the scenes, particularly during the second Intifada.

With respect to the third dimension—the type of spoiler—Stedman (1997) distinguishes spoiler type based upon the party's *goals*, whether *total* or *limited* political power, and on its *commitment* to the pursuit of those goals, whether *high* (i.e., unalterably dedicated to achieving

its power ambitions) or *low* (i.e., pragmatically attached to the pursuit of these ambitions). To elaborate, Stedman argues that the goal at the strategic level is *political power*. Power is instrumental; it is a means to an end, a resource with which to realize a desired end-state. All parties in a civil war seek power, Stedman observes, but not all parties seek total power; they differ in their power aspirations, which span the spectrum from total to limited power. At the high end, the desire is for exclusive power and recognition of authority, or at least dominant power. At the low end of the spectrum, aspirations are restricted to a significant share of power or to the exercise of power subject to democratic controls or constitutional constraints (see Figure 10).

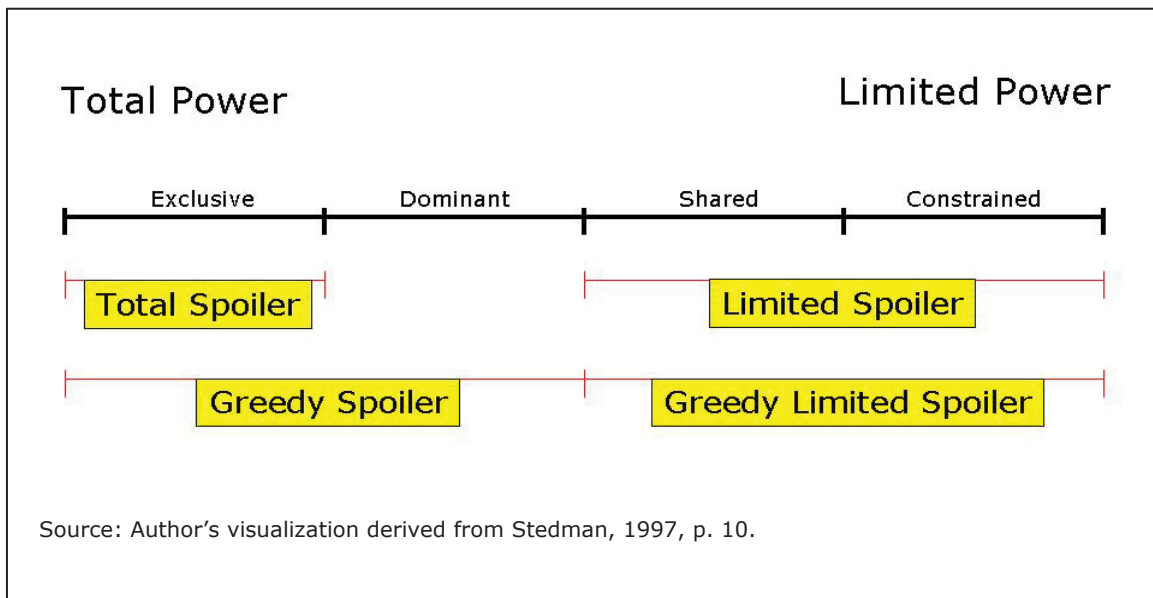


Figure 11: Spectrum of Power Ambitions

The second distinguishing feature is the *commitment* of the parties to realizing their power ambitions. Stedman (1997) characterizes commitment in two ways: (a) the immutability of a party's preferences, and (b) a party's sensitivity to costs/risks. The more a party's goals are carved in stone and the greater its willingness to tolerate risks and endure costs to achieve those goals, the higher its commitment is said to be. Conversely, the more open it is to compromise on its preferences and the greater its reluctance to accept risks and bear costs, the lower its commitment.

On the basis of goals (or power ambitions) and commitment, Stedman identifies four generic types of spoilers:

- A *total spoiler* seeks total power and exclusive recognition of authority, a goal to which it is highly or irrevocably committed. As Stedman (1997) describes them,

[total] spoilers are led by individuals who see the world in all-or-nothing terms and often suffer from pathological tendencies that prevent the pragmatism necessary for compromise settlements of conflict. Total spoilers often espouse radical ideologies; total power is a means for achieving such goals as the violent transformation of society. (pp. 10–11)

This strategic role links back to the grand strategic-level roles of *Transformer* or *Captor*. In counterinsurgency doctrine, total spoilers are generally labeled “irreconcilables.” It is assumed that the only strategy for dealing with such actors is to marginalize or isolate them from society and, ultimately, to physically remove them from the operating environment (“kill or capture”).

A *limited spoiler* harbours more limited power ambitions and is willing to share power with its competitors or to accept the constitutionally-constrained exercise of power. This links back to the grand strategic-level role of *Stakeholder*. Desired ends include recognition and redress of grievance, and basic security of followers. Limited goals, however, do not necessarily imply low or weak commitment. Stedman (1997) remarks that a limited spoiler may be highly or firmly committed to its goals and willing to sacrifice much in order to achieve them (p. 10).

- A *greedy spoiler*’s aspirations may range along the length of the power ambition spectrum, and, hence, it may assume any of the three above-mentioned grand strategic roles. The difference between the greedy and the total or limited spoiler is that the greedy spoiler’s goals expand or contract depending on its ongoing cost/risk assessment (ibid., p. 11). That is, its goals may be total (a *greedy spoiler* proper) or limited (a *greedy limited spoiler*), but its commitment to these goals is uniformly low.

These spoiler types can be located within a two-dimensional goals/commitment matrix (see Table 1):

Table 1: Stedman's Typology of Spoilers (as interpreted by Zahar).

	Limited goals	Total goals
Low commitment	1 Greedy or limited spoilers	2 Greedy spoilers
High commitment	3 Limited spoilers	4 Total spoilers

Source: Zahar, 2003, p. 115, Table 10.1.

The cardinal rule for classification schemes or typologies is that classes must be both *exhaustive* and *mutually exclusive*, that is, all possible cases or concepts should be captured and each assigned to one and only one class (Bailey, 1994, p. 3). As set out in the table, Stedman's typology seems to violate the second requirement. Political scientist Marie-Jöelle Zahar (2003)—the originator of the table—points out that the two distinguishing dimensions do not sufficiently differentiate spoiler types. Two supposedly different spoilers—the greedy and limited spoilers in Cell 1—have the same goal/commitment profile. As well, two types each span two different cells—limited spoilers in Cells 1 and 3, and greedy spoilers in Cells 1 and 2 (Zahar, 2003, p. 115).

The apparent ambiguities in the typology lie in Zahar's misreading of Stedman's classification scheme and in an unfortunate blurring of terminology on Stedman's part. Zahar (2003) counts five spoiler types in Table 1 whereas Stedman explicitly discusses only four (Stedman, 1997, pp. 10, 14). She mistakenly distinguishes two limited spoiler types—one with low commitment, the other with high commitment—while Stedman describes the limited spoiler only in terms of high commitment.⁶ Therefore, we can eliminate the limited spoiler (limited goals/low commitment) in Cell 1 of the table above and thereby resolve the "spillover" problem.

There remains Stedman's confusion of terminology. He gives two distinct spoilers—the "greedy spoiler with total goals" and the "greedy limited spoiler"—the same root name, *greedy spoiler*. Unfortunate, but easily corrected: we simply assign a different name to one of these greedy spoilers. We shall retain the label *greedy spoiler* for the spoiler with total goals and low

⁶ Stedman (1997) says that "Limited goals do not imply limited [i.e., low] commitment to achieving those goals" (p. 10). If he had intended to hold out the possibility of a limited spoiler with low commitment, this sentence would have properly read "Limited goals do not *necessarily* imply limited commitment to achieving those goals." Elsewhere, he observes that "A limited spoiler can be accommodated by meeting its *nonnegotiable* [emphasis added] demands" (p. 14). If a limited spoiler's core demands are nonnegotiable, that is, there is no room for compromise, this, too, suggests that its commitment to those demands is high. Hence, from a careful reading of Stedman's description of the limited spoiler, we are forced to conclude that there is no such thing as a limited spoiler with *low* commitment.

commitment and designate the spoiler with limited goals and low commitment an *opportunistic spoiler*. Resolving the interpretation and terminology problems in this manner leaves us with four unambiguously distinct spoiler types, thereby satisfying the criterion of exclusivity. Factoring in the position dimension—whether the spoiler is inside or outside the peace process—gives us a typology consisting of eight discrete types (see Table 2):

Table 2: Corrected Typology of Spoilers.

Commitment	Position	Goal type	
		Limited	Total
Low	Outside	<i>Opportunistic (O)</i>	<i>Greedy (O)</i>
	Inside	<i>Opportunistic (I)</i>	<i>Greedy (I)</i>
High	Outside	<i>Limited (O)</i>	<i>Total (O)</i>
	Inside	<i>Limited (I)</i>	<i>Total (I)</i>

Note. (O) denotes “outside the peace process”; (I) denotes “inside the peace process.”

Spoiler as a Role Identity

It is important to emphasize that there are no objective criteria, traits, or features that characterize the spoiler types identified in Table 2. An individual is not a spoiler in the same way that he/she is male or female. Rather, the concept of spoiler is a *role identity*, defined in terms of the values, norms, attitudes, expectations, and behaviours thought to be associated with that particular position. As political scientist Corinne Heaven (2010) observes, whether or not an ANSA is seen as a spoiler depends on the structuring of the discursive field, the elements or identities of which are “incomplete, negotiable and contested” (p. 13) and only gain meaning from their relational position to other elements or identities in the discourse. In this case, the meaning of spoiler is discursively constructed, through the peace process, in juxtaposition to “non-spoiler,” that is, “peace agents” and third-party intermediaries or custodians of peace (ibid., p. 14). As these role identities are derived from values, norms, and expectations rather than inherent traits, they are inevitably contested and, hence, constantly changing and evolving, with the content of a

role identity at any particular time depending on which discourse is dominant. In the case of Stedman's spoiler typology, there are two dominant discourses underpinning his classification scheme. At the theoretical level, the dominant discourse is realism. Briefly, this discourse assumes that power and the pursuit of power is the driving force behind group relations. Behaviour is understood in terms of rational choice theory borrowed from the field of microeconomics; actors (*homo strategicus*, first cousin to *homo economicus*) are assumed to weigh the relative costs and benefits of competing courses of action to achieve a desired end-state. This theoretical discourse is reflected in Stedman's two-dimensional typology in which the *goal* is political power, whether total or limited, and *commitment* to the pursuit of power is a rational outgrowth of actors' risk propensities and cost sensitivities.

At the policy level, the dominant discourse is the liberal peacebuilding framework, the core elements of which include constitutional agreements, democratization, human rights safeguards, the rule of law, and the free market (Newman & Richmond, 2006, p. 3; see also Dansie, 2009, p. 14; Heaven, 2010, pp. 9–11). Stedman's typology embodies this policy discourse, implicitly assuming these values to be universal and the liberal peace model to be the best way to organize post-conflict societies. It follows within this discourse that those who reject the model's values and do not conform to its prescribed norms or rules of behaviour are spoilers.

Following Heaven's argument, if the two dominant discourses underlying Stedman's typology were to be eclipsed, the content of the spoiler type concepts in Table 2 might be very different. For example, a more psychologically-oriented discourse might define motives and intentions (or goals) in terms of the pursuit of a stable *self-concept* (see Taylor, 2002) rather than political power as in the realist discourse. In this alternative discourse, a total spoiler might be better understood as one for whom the clarity and stability of his/her personal and collective identities depend upon a continuing state of social turmoil rather than as one who aspires to absolute political control. Such a total spoiler may still be rational, broadly speaking, but not in the Enlightenment sense of the term intrinsic to the realist discourse. That is, the rewards he/she expects from a high-cost course of action (e.g., suicide bombing) may not be of this world but, rather, await the spoiler in paradise (shades of the Cosmic Warrior mentioned above).

The role identity of spoiler is discursively-constructed; there are no fixed features that define a spoiler.

Similarly for the discourse at the policy level. Violent opposition to a peace settlement incorporating the elements of the liberal peacebuilding

model may not be seen by all parties as spoiling behaviour. Under a competing anti-colonialist discourse, for example, such opposition might be considered legitimate resistance to an

internationally-imposed, neo-imperialist “peace.” This brief reflection reinforces Heaven’s basic point: role identities such as spoiler are discursively constructed; there are no fixed features that define them.

Hamas—A Total or Limited Spoiler?

The case of the Palestinian ANSA *Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-‘Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Resistance Movement—Hamas) illustrates the difficulty in applying these discursively-constructed spoiler types in the real world. Is this group a total or limited spoiler with respect to the (sputtering) Middle East peace process? Writing in 2003, Zahar insists that Hamas is an ideologically-driven total spoiler:

Ideologically, their survival may be premised on the continuation of strife...For such movements as the Palestinian Hamas, peace with Israel would undermine the very bases of their existence. If we accept that political actors are ultimately interested in remaining politically relevant, such groups see compromise as political suicide. (p. 118)

Seven years later, her assessment of Hamas has not changed:

First, their [outside spoilers’] ideology is premised on fighting the enemy as is the case, for example, with the Palestinian Hamas. Political actors are interested in remaining politically relevant; for such groups compromise is tantamount to political suicide. (Zahar, 2010, p. 269)

She holds fast to her original assessment despite Hamas’s (admittedly mixed) record of rigidity and flexibility over the intervening years (Klein, 2007; Scham & Abu-Irshaid, 2009), for instance, engaging in major combat with Israel on seven occasions from 2004–2013⁷, yet holding to indirectly-negotiated ceasefires with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the intervals between these confrontations.⁸

⁷ These include

- IDF Operation RAINBOW May 2004,
- IDF Operation DAYS OF PENITENCE September–October 2004,
- IDF Operation SUMMER RAINS June–November 2006,
- IDF Operation AUTUMN CLOUDS November 2006,
- IDF Operation HOT WINTER February–March 2008,
- IDF Operation CAST LEAD December 2008–January 2009, and
- IDF Operation PILLAR OF DEFENSE November 2012.

⁸ Formal and informal ceasefires (*tahadiya* or “calming”) with Israel include the periods

- August 2004–August 2005,

Zahar's invariant assessment reflects what political scientist Menachem Klein (2007) calls the "static approach" (p. 442). Adherents of this approach are "typically found among the more traditional terrorism scholars and the essentialists within Islamism studies" (Gunning, 2008, p. 4). To these scholars, Hamas is ideologically incapable of change and will never accept the existence of Israel (see, for example, Darby, 2001; Herzog, 2006, 2010; Ross, 2008). They maintain that Hamas



Figure 12: Smoke rising from a building in the northern Gaza Strip after an Israeli airstrike during Operation Pillar of Defense. Source: Stermann, 2012.

has certain inherent characteristics and that it cannot, and will not, change...Violent and so-called 'fanatical' behaviour is highlighted as an innate characteristic while contradictory evidence is marginalized as irrelevant or duplicitous. Hamas' welfare network is depicted as solely dedicated to funding, promoting and supporting terrorism without much consideration of what other purposes this network may serve, and what contradictions this introduces...Tensions between Hamas' political theory and democratic principles are explained away by pointing to the fundamental incompatibility between political Islam and democracy...Evidence of transformation is ignored... (Gunning, 2008, pp. 1–2)

This view stems in part from a narrow focus on Hamas's 1988 Covenant (Hamas, 1988), which is seen in Israel and the West as the movement's defining document (Hroub, 2006, paras. 1, 5; Scham & Abu-Irshaid, 2009, p. 4).⁹ This focus ignores the particular historical context in which

-
- March 2005–June 2006,
 - November 2006–April 2007,
 - January 2009–November 2012, and
 - November 2012–?

⁹ This focus on the 1988 Covenant is reminiscent of the inordinate importance attached to the provisions of the Palestinian National Charter—the PLO's constitution—calling for the destruction of Israel, provisions that had effectively fallen into desuetude after the conclusion of the Oslo accords in 1993. The controversy was not laid to rest until December 1998 when the Palestine National Council, with US President Clinton in attendance, formally approved PLO Chairman Arafat's letter to Clinton nullifying the offensive provisions.

that document was drawn up, “less than a year after the movement was established in direct response to the outbreak of the first intifada and when its *raison d’être* was armed resistance to the occupation” (Hroub, 2006, para. 5). It turns a blind eye to the considerable evolution since its founding in Hamas’s thinking and practice under the impact of political developments, reflected, for example, in three “remarkable” documents published in the run-up to and the aftermath of Palestinian legislative elections in 2005–2006: the pre-election platform for Hamas’s “Change and Reform” list, the post-election proposed National Unity Government program, and the follow-on cabinet platform (Hroub, 2006).

However, the static approach with its assumption that the destruction of Israel is Hamas’s sole purpose in life is facile. As Middle East scholar Jeroen Gunning (2008) notes in his seminal study of the movement, “Hamas has multiple [often contradictory] goals and *equal, if not greater interest in shaping Palestinian society as in liberating all of Palestine* [emphasis added]” (p. 269). (Though there is no room here to elaborate on this point, the reader is encouraged to refer to Gunning’s book where he presents the extensive evidence upon which he bases this conclusion.) Indeed, Hamas is a broad-based social movement deeply embedded in Palestinian society. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were to miraculously resolve itself tomorrow (a highly unlikely prospect), Hamas would not simply wither and die.

Whether Hamas is seen as a total or limited spoiler will determine whether or not it is brought into the MEPP or remains isolated and embittered.

Why is it important whether Hamas is seen as a total or limited spoiler? Is it not enough that it is a spoiler pure and simple, something that no Middle East observer would dispute? If Hamas is a limited spoiler as many contend (see, for example,

Gunning, 2004; Klein, 2007; Mishal & Sela, 2000; Ní Cheallacháin, 2010; Scham & Abu-Irshaid, 2009), then there is at least a theoretical possibility that the group might be capable of compromise and could be drawn into the peace process (though not necessarily the stalled Oslo/Road Map framework). As Stedman (1997) argues, a limited spoiler may be susceptible to peace custodians’ strategies of *inducement*, “taking positive measures to address the grievances of factions who obstruct peace” (p. 12), and *socialization*, establishing “a set of norms of acceptable behavior” (p. 13). On the other hand, the only management option for total spoilers, Stedman says, is *coercion*, “the use or threat of punishment to deter or alter unacceptable spoiler behavior or reduce the capability of the spoiler to disrupt the peace process” (ibid.). Israel’s and the international community’s pronouncement of Hamas as either a total or limited spoiler will

determine whether it is brought into some form of peace process or remains isolated and embittered on the sidelines.

Motives Underlying Spoiling Behaviour

The Hamas case study introduces the critical question of spoilers' motivations and intentions. Spoiling behaviour—or what is seen by others as spoiling behaviour—is not, as per Stedman's definition, simply a function of the perceived threat of peace to a spoiler's rights, privileges, and interests, although it is undeniably this as well. The reality is far more complex. Indeed, there may be a range of motives that might impel an actor to engage in spoiling behaviour. Bhatia and Sedra (2008) offer a typology of motives for combat mobilization in the context of the insurgency in Afghanistan, any or all of which may be salient for spoilers at different times and under different circumstances over the course of a peace process:

- material entitlements and incentives,
- primary group belonging and affiliation,
- ideology,
- grievance and revenge,
- authority and obedience,
- coercion and enforcement,
- protection and defence,
- adventure, and
- habit (p. 94).

Spoilers flourish in an environment of social tension and conflict and act to perpetuate this turmoil for many of the motives listed here. Let us examine some of these motives in more detail.

One motive relates to *material entitlements and incentives*. Spoilers may derive material gain from the war economy through the illegal trade in commodities, drugs, and human beings—this corresponds to the “greed” thesis of civil war associated with the work of Paul Collier and colleagues (see, for example, Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Blood diamonds, for example, are said to have fueled the civil wars in several African countries over the past two decades, serving as an indispensable source of financing for the ANSAs engaged. These groups oppose efforts to end

armed conflict for fear that state-imposed order accompanying the restoration of social peace will close off these opportunities for illicit gain.

As mentioned above, persistent intergroup conflict may be critical to an individual's or group's personal and collective identities (*primary group belonging and affiliation*). As Juergensmeyer (2003) remarks, "to live in a state of war is to live in a world in which individuals know who they are, why they have suffered, by whose hand they have been humiliated, and at what expense they have persevered" (p. 158). Peace may threaten these identities, and, accordingly, spoilers will do their best to prevent peace from breaking out.

At the grand strategic level, a peace settlement may not accord with a spoiler's broader regional or global vision (*ideology*), as was the case with al-Qaeda and its violent opposition to the Swat Valley peace settlement in early 2009 (the following account of events is drawn largely from Shahzad, 2011, pp. 165–176). In the immediate aftermath of the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) debacle in July 2007, AQ sought to foment a revolt in the Swat Valley, a picturesque region some 400 km from the federal capital, Islamabad, in the northern reaches of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK province; formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province). Discontent had long been simmering in the valley. *Tekrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* (The Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia—TNSM), founded in 1992 by Maulana Sufi Mohammed (and subsequently banned by President Pervez Musharraf in January 2002), demanded the revival of the rule of Islamic law in the Swat and Malakand divisions as had been the case before Pakistan dissolved the autonomous princely state of Swat in 1969. By late 2008, government security forces had lost control of the valley to the militants. The Army concluded that it could only prevail if a much larger force was dispatched to the region. This, however, would require the redeployment of forces from Pakistan's frontier with longstanding rival India, something it was loathe to do. The only alternative, then, at least as the Army saw it, was to accept the militants' demand for implementation of Islamic law in the valley. Mohammed was released from detention (he had been detained in November 2001, at his own request, after returning from the fight against US forces in Afghanistan) to participate in negotiations with the provincial government. On 16 February 2009, an agreement was signed between the KPK government and representatives of the TNSM in Peshawar for the enforcement of Islamic law in the Swat, Malakand, and Kohistan areas (known as the *Sharia Nizam-e-Adl Regulation, 2009*, and amending the earlier 1999 ordinance; see "Pakistan agrees," 2009). A ceasefire was announced, and normal life began to return to Swat.

The provincial government forwarded the agreement to President Asif Zardari for his signature, but he delayed its ratification for nearly two months until "the writ of the government [had] been

established” in the restive region (Khan, 2009, para. 12). This gave AQ its opportunity to act. Zardari finally signed the ordinance on 13 April, but by then it was too late. More than 500 militants under command of the leading AQ operative in the valley, Bin Yameen, entered Buner, roughly 100 km from Islamabad, in the first week of April 2009 and seized control of the area with minimal opposition on 12 April (Roggio, 2009). With that, the fragile ceasefire collapsed.

Why did AQ set out to spoil the Swat agreement? It was not that AQ ideologues thought the agreement per se was inadequate. As slain Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad (2011) observes in his book, published after his death, “what aspect of Islam was being enforced in the valley was irrelevant to them. The issue was that peace would disengage Pakistan’s armed forces from the valley and enable them to start operations in the tribal areas again, which would



Figure 13: Tribal elders and Taliban members meet in a mosque in Daggar, Buner District, Pakistan, 23 April 2009. Source: “Meeting between Taliban,” 2009.

affect al-Qaeda’s fight in Afghanistan” (p. 173). In other words, a peace agreement in Swat would negatively impact AQ’s military operations elsewhere in the region.

More broadly, peace in Swat did not accord with AQ’s grand strategic vision. Shahzad writes that AQ sees Afghanistan and Pakistan as one theatre of war (ibid., p. 187), the former being the main battlefield and the tribal areas in the latter the “strategic backyard” of the resistance (ibid., p. 202). In this theatre of operations, AQ’s main aim is to “create a situation where Pakistan would remain non-governable until Al-Qaeda ideologues and fighters successfully seized control of two provinces, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Balochistan. These two provinces were then intended to become the hub of Al-Qaeda activities to provide recruitment and training for their battle against the NATO troops in Afghanistan” (ibid., p. 175).

The fight in Afghanistan lies at the heart of AQ’s grand strategic vision of global war. Its centrality “rotated around the Prophet Muhammad’s saying [*hadith*] which referred to the basic theater of war of the “End of Time” battles as Khurasan [comprising parts of modern-day Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and central Asia]. From there it was to move on to the neighbouring region of India, from where all the Muslim forces would be mobilized towards the Balad-al-Sham (Syria, Lebanon

and Palestine) to fight the final battle for the liberation of Palestine, and then revive the Caliphate” (ibid., p. 201).

AQ played the spoiler in Swat, then, in order to support its short-term regional military operations as well as its longer-term grand strategic vision. At least in the short-run, its strategy was a success. The collapse of the ceasefire in Swat diverted Pakistan’s army from Operation SHER DIL (Lion Heart) in the tribal areas of Mohmand and Bajaur, allowing the militants to regroup and launch attacks on the neighbouring Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan (ibid., p. 175). No reasonable observer, on the other hand, can doubt the failure of its delusional longer-term strategy.

The perceived rejectionist attitudes and behaviours of spoilers may have little or nothing to do with an intention to perpetuate an unending state of anarchy. Indeed, they may sincerely want a social environment of security and predictability. However, what they reject is the liberal model of peace (*ideology*). As Newman and Richmond (2006) note, the liberal peacebuilding discourse is not neutral, nor are the values underpinning this model necessarily universally shared or appropriate in any and all circumstances (p. 4; also Dansie, 2009, p. 34). Even if these values are shared, the manner of their application is not always equitable or fair and is “certainly loaded in favour of the market and the status quo” (Newman & Richmond, 2006, p. 4).

A core element of the liberal peacebuilding model is the establishment of a strong, effective central government. Based upon bitter experience, opponents to a peace settlement may see such a government as a threat to their commercial or political interests and as a tool to be used against them by hostile societal forces. For example, in the middle of the last decade, business interests in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, seemed to genuinely want a stable, predictable environment in which to pursue their economic activities after the chaos of the early civil war years (Menkhaus, 2006/2007, p. 76). However, they—like all Somalis—remembered the brutal repression under the centralized government of the dictator Siad Barre and were understandably hesitant to throw their support behind the top-down state-building exercises with which the international community was—and is—so enamoured. As social anthropologist and Africa expert Alex de Waal (2007) describes it, “clan politics is inherently a zero-sum game. While all will gain if there is a stable and representative government in Somalia, all military factions fear that they will lose heavily if state control goes to a rival faction. Therefore, in a version of the prisoner’s dilemma, any one clan-faction always has an interest in opting out of any proposed agreement” (de Waal, 2007, “The impasse in southern Somalia,” para. 1).

Reinforcing these fears are disputes over the control of resources, especially land. During the early civil war period, the clan militiamen—or self-styled “liberators”—of General Mohamed Farah Aidid’s United Somali Congress (USC) poured across the riverine areas along the banks of the Jubba and Shebelle rivers in southern Somalia, forcibly seizing land from “landowners” who,



Figure 14: Jubba River. Source: Yuusuf, 2011.

over the years, had themselves dispossessed the original minority group “farmers”—the Digil and Rahanweyn, Shebelle, Gabwing/Gabaweyn, and various Bantu groups—who had worked the land for over a century (these three classes are distinguished in *ibid.*, “Class in agrarian areas,” para. 1). Ownership of this disputed

territory has yet to be resolved, and this issue has become inextricably tied to efforts to re-establish a central authority in Mogadishu. The landowners largely welcome such a move, as they anticipate that a central government would acknowledge their legal title to the land. The liberators, on the other hand, fear such a development, as their hold on the land rests primarily on force. The farmers, as the weakest of the three parties, have been pushed to the margins of the dispute despite their longstanding historical claims to the land. As democracy and governance specialist Bronwyn Bruton (2011) observes, these tensions “underlie the Somalis’ ongoing resistance to the creation of a central state: the clan that captures control of the next government of Somalia will decide whether it is history, title or possession that truly determines ownership of the land” (p. 24).

As this example demonstrates, it is not necessarily peace that spoilers reject but, rather, the liberal peacebuilding model with its insistence upon the imposition of a powerful central government on society. Another model, rooted in an alternative policy discourse, might have more appeal and bring these spoilers in from the cold. In the Somalia case, for example, Somalia expert Ken Menkhaus (2006/2007) proposes a mediated state model “in which a [“thin”] central government with limited power and capacity relies on a diverse range of local authorities to execute core functions of government and mediate relations between local communities and the state,” a structure somewhat akin to the pre-modern and early modern state system in Europe (p. 103). Such mediated states, Menkhaus admits, “are intrinsically messy, contradictory, illiberal, and constantly renegotiated deals—not ideal choices for governments, but often the best of bad options for weak states” (*ibid.*, p. 78). This may be the only model that has enough appeal, in the sense of checking the growth of a strong and potentially repressive central government, to bring Somali spoilers back into the fold.

Paradoxically, the terms of a final peace settlement may themselves create conditions and pressures that motivate actors to engage in spoiling behaviour (*grievance and revenge*). Conflict resolution expert Juliette Shedd (2008) discusses this in the context of the 1996 Russo-Chechen peace agreement. She prefaces her analysis with the observation that all peace processes and agreements are flawed. Nevertheless, she says, a flawed agreement may be better than no agreement if it lays the foundation for “the rebuilding of relationships between the parties and renewal of ties that inhibit violence” (Shedd, 2008, p. 102). The hastily-drafted and adopted



Figure 15: Residents of the capital Grozny walk past the destroyed presidential palace weeks after the 1994 Russian campaign. Source: “Chechnya profile,” 2013.

Russo-Chechen agreement manifestly did neither of these things. It failed to address the permanent status issues dividing the parties. Its terms were vague and open to very different interpretations on the part of the parties. Yet, in stopping the active violence—though politically expedient for both sides at the time—it relieved the pressure on the parties to tackle the central issues in dispute. It removed the motivation for or the commitment to sustaining the process and working out the details of a long-term peace. As Shedd (2008) remarks, “the agreement reached by the parties rewarded both sides for stalling the process and acting as spoilers” (p. 100).

From the standpoint of organizational survival, ANSA leaders may see sustained spoiling behaviour—or “armed struggle”—inimical to the peace process as essential to maintaining their authority and their followers’ obedience and, hence, to reinforcing group unity and cohesion (*authority and obedience*). Alternatively, the destruction of the peace process may be a secondary or unintended consequence of spoiling behaviour related to factional competition within the ANSA. Political scientist and Middle East specialist Wendy Pearlman (2009), for example, uses the competition among Palestinian factions as a case study to highlight domestic political concerns as a driver of seemingly anti-peace process violent behaviour. She presents an internal contestation model where spoiling behaviour is primarily an outgrowth of competition among factions within a non-state actor for leadership of a national community. Leaders of dominant factions most often have the most to gain from participation in a peace process, for example, external recognition of their leadership, increased access to material resources, and institutional ascendancy over their rivals (Pearlman, 2009, p. 85). Conversely, leaders of subordinate factions

have the most to lose from a process that shifts the internal balance of power in favour of their factional opponents. Hence, they try to undermine their rivals' authority in the eyes of their national constituency by chipping away at the legitimacy of the peace process in which their competitors are so heavily invested. Their spoiling behaviour has little if anything to do with a desire to destroy the process *qua* peace process but, rather, with maximizing their leverage in the internal power struggle with their rivals. As an example, the Palestinian ANSA *Harakat al-Jihād al-Islāmi fī Filastin* (Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine or Palestinian Islamic Jihad—PIJ) reportedly launched several rockets into southern Israel on 24 June 2013, threatening a fragile six-month ceasefire between Israel, Hamas, and other Palestinian militant groups operating in Gaza. Though targeting Israel, the rocket attack was thought to be rooted in an internal dispute between Hamas and PIJ, specifically, in the shooting of a PIJ militant by Hamas security forces as they tried to arrest him for kidnapping. It later appeared that friends of the dead militant had fired off the rockets as payback for the killing, hoping to disrupt the cease-fire that Hamas had tried to maintain with Israel (Kershner, 2013).

There may also be structural reasons why an actor engages in spoiling behaviour regardless of the motivations and intentions of the leadership. Non-compliant behaviour may reflect a lack of organizational control and an inadequate command structure within the group. The leadership may be unable to impose its decisions with respect to the peace process on its followers. Dissident factions may simply disregard the leadership's preferences and engage in spoiling behaviour. In such a case, the intentions and commitment of the leadership with respect to the peace process may be irrelevant to the incidence of spoiling behaviour.

Spoiling behaviour is actor-specific and context-dependent.

As this discussion highlights, there are various and sundry motives underlying spoiling behaviour. Life would certainly be simpler if,

as Stedman maintains, all spoilers' opposition to peace was a simple function of a perceived threat to power and interests (ignoring, for instance, the critical importance of self-concept and identity). The messy reality is that spoiling behaviour is actor-specific and context-dependent. One needs to understand the motivations and intentions of specific ANSAs as well as the particular conflict environment (and the opportunity structures therein) within which they operate in order to understand why and when they assume the role of spoiler.

Refining the Typology

In the years since the publication of his *International Security* article, Stedman's typology has come under close scrutiny and critique, much of it constructive, some of it less so. New directions

and refinements have been suggested that sharpen his original concept. Newman and Richmond (2006), for example, suggest that, rather than restricting spoilers to “leaders and parties” directly involved in the conflict, *any actor* opposed to a peace process for whatever reason can engage in the spoiler role. This not only includes non-state actors but states and their agents as well. For example, the French Army played a decisive spoiler role early in the war for Algerian independence (1954–1962). Over the course of 1956, secret conversations were held between the French government of Prime Minister Mollet and the external leadership of the *Front de Libération Nationale* (National Liberation Front—FLN) under Ben Bella. After a series of “talks on talks,” the two sides agreed to meet at the end of October to publicly declare their intention to launch full-scale peace negotiations (Horne, 2006, pp. 194–195). That month, a five-member delegation, comprising the key figures in the FLN’s external leadership, flew out of Morocco bound for Tunis, where they planned to hold a summit conference with Moroccan and Tunisian officials to discuss the conduct of the armed struggle and the nascent peace initiatives prior to meeting with the French. Alerted to the flight, the French military leadership ordered the diversion to Algiers of the Air Maroc DC-3 (with a French crew) on which the delegation was travelling, and the delegates’ subsequent arrest on landing. Horne (2006) comments that

to this day there remains some mystery as to whether the coup [the hijacking of Ben Bella and his colleagues] was in fact a first major instance of the French military acting on its own initiative, in disregard of the civil authorities, *expressly with a view to torpedoing the peace negotiations* [emphasis added]. (pp. 197–198)

The FLN leaders spent the next five-and-a-half years in French prisons, and the ephemeral chance for a peaceful resolution of the conflict slipped away: “As far as the peace negotiations, so delicately initiated by Mollet himself, were concerned, the bridges were truly down, and it would not be possible to re-erect them for many years to come” (ibid., p. 199). The French Army succeeded in spoiling the nascent peace process but at tremendous cost to the peoples of Algeria and France (the Algerian government places the number of war dead at one million [ibid., pp. 661–662]).

Spoilers may also include a wide range of external actors, often geographically removed from the conflict zone, such as ethnic or

Other state and non-state actors may engage in spoiling behaviour.

national diaspora communities, states, business interests, political allies, or others who stand to gain in some manner from the continuation of conflict. Stedman (1997) himself recognizes that the “biggest potential liability in managing a spoiler are member states that are patrons of the spoiler” (p. 16). They provide support to favoured spoilers “even in the face of outrageous

behaviour,” under pressure from domestic groups or prior policy commitments (ibid., pp. 16–17). This support may heighten the spoilers’ sense of empowerment in negotiations, encouraging them to seek more ambitious goals and to engage in more disruptive behaviour than might otherwise have been the case (Newman & Richmond, 2006, p. 2). Reciprocally, this external support might foster a sense of obligation on the part of spoilers to adopt less accommodating strategies better suited to the anti-peace interests of their state sponsors.

I would like to suggest two additional refinements to the spoiler typology. The first broadens Stedman’s overly narrow view of what constitutes a peace process. I have doubts about limiting the context of spoiling behaviour to the implementation phase of a formal and public peace agreement, the outcome of official Track I diplomacy. Understood more broadly, a *peace process* encompasses the long and often tortuous series of negotiations, dialogue, and other conflict resolution processes that, if successful, culminate in a comprehensive agreement (Ricigliano, 2005, pp. 98–99).¹⁰ Former US diplomat Harold Saunders (1996) describes *peace process* in even more expansive terms, maintaining that “peace requires a process of building constructive

An ANSA can assume the role of spoiler in any arena and at any stage in a peacebuilding process.

relationships in a civil society not just negotiating, signing, and ratifying a formal agreement” (p. 420). He sees peacebuilding as a multilayered, multistage process that may play out in any of five arenas and generally

progresses through five stages (for a description of these arenas and stages, see Saunders, 2000, pp. 262–263, and Saunders, 2001, pp. 19–30, 81–146). While Stedman is right to insist on the need for a peace process before an ANSA can become a spoiler, one need not have a formal Track I (Saunders’ “Official” arena) peace agreement in hand before such an obstructionist role becomes salient. An ANSA can assume the role of spoiler in any arena and at any stage in a peacebuilding process. For example, on 18 January 2010, the Afghan Taliban launched a coordinated series of attacks in the Afghan capital, declaring afterward that this action was taken in order to abort President Karzai’s call for a national reconciliation process and to demonstrate that the Taliban was “not for sale” to his government and its foreign allies (Thottam, 2010, para. 6). These spoiling actions, spurning the hand of reconciliation that Karzai was offering, came in the first of Saunders’ five stages—the “Deciding to Engage” phase—when prospective parties to a peace process decide to sit down and talk to the enemy; the implementation phase of a formal peace

¹⁰ *Conflict resolution processes* have been defined as “the methods and processes of negotiation, arbitration, and institution building which promote the peaceful ending of social conflict and war”—see McLean & McMillan, 2003, p. 107. This differs from *conflict management processes*, which are the techniques of diplomacy, deterrence, and containment by which the parties seek to contain conflicts that defy resolution—derived from Nolan, 2002, p. 338.

agreement between the Taliban and the Kabul government—an activity falling in Saunders’ fifth “Acting Together” stage—still lies in the far distant future, assuming an accord is even possible.

Secondly, the spoiler typology needs to be broadened to include the strategic role of *partner*. According to Stedman (1997), barring a change in leadership, total spoilers cannot be brought into peace processes. By choice, they hold themselves outside the process in implacable opposition to compromise, the prerequisite for any conflict settlement. Limited and greedy limited (i.e., opportunistic) spoilers, on the other hand, can be brought inside peace processes:

Limited spoilers can conceivably be included in peace processes, if their limited nonnegotiable demands can be accommodated by other parties to the conflict. Greedy spoilers can be accommodated in peace processes if their limited goals are met and high costs constrain them from making added demands. (Stedman, 1997, p. 11)

However, as inside spoilers, their active participation in the process is at most a tactical manoeuvre, a means to gain advantage in the struggle against their enemies. They are, figuratively speaking, Trojan horses, outwardly committed to managing and, ultimately, resolving the conflict in cooperation with other parties while surreptitiously working to ensure the process does not succeed. But what if, in light of the accommodations that have drawn them into the peace process in the first place, they become genuinely committed to the process and its outcome? In other words, what if spoilers no longer think and act as spoilers?

Herein lies the shortfall in Stedman’s typology. Although a definite advance in our understanding of the strategic roles ANSAs can play in relation to a peace process, there is

*We need an expanded classification scheme that includes the binary opposite to spoiler — the **partner**.*

one major problem with Stedman’s scheme: its one-sidedness. It focuses only on those strategic roles that stand in some degree of opposition to a peace process. What is needed is an expanded classification scheme, a general dichotomous typology that explicitly includes the binary opposite to spoiler. Some refer to such a typological opposite as *peacemaker*. I would substitute the term *partner* for peacemaker, in order to avoid the presumption of nobility of spirit and pacificity of intention associated with the latter term. One may participate in a peace process based on hard-nosed calculations of self-interest without being favourably disposed towards the other participants. Indeed, feelings of bitterness and animosity among the parties may linger throughout the process. As US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked with respect to the “distasteful, even unimaginable” prospect of reconciling with “an adversary as brutal as the Taliban,” “diplomacy would be easy if we only had to talk to our friends. But that is not how one

makes peace” (Coll, 2011, para. 4). The point here is that, whether peacemaker or partner, a second general role identity is needed as the antithesis to spoiler.

Implicit in this is the recognition that, hard as it may seem when they are shooting at us, ANSAs can become active participants in a conflict resolution process. Recall UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s comments at the 1987 Vancouver Commonwealth Summit. At a press conference on October 17th, she told reporters

I will have nothing to do with any organisation that practices violence. I have never seen anyone from ANC or the PLO or the IRA and would not do so. Nor will we have any truck with any of the organisations; we never negotiate with hostage taking or anything like that. (Thatcher, 1987, “Question (Cathay Television Vancouver),” para. 8)

In the event, all three organizations became participants in their respective peace processes (with varying degrees of success). The point here is that ANSAs are not always or exclusively roadblocks to peace. In some circumstances, they may actually hold the key to resolving violent social conflict. At the very least, we must recognize the *partner* role that ANSAs potentially may play and not a priori restrict our analytical horizons to ANSAs’ disruptive roles only.

Other scholars have recognized this imperative. For example, John Darby (2001), a specialist in ethnic conflict and peace processes, developed a modified typology consisting of four elements, one of which roughly corresponds to the role of partner (pp. 47–49). At the radical end of the spectrum are the *zealots* (Stedman’s total spoilers), groups committed to the violent overthrow of the peace process. Likewise, *opportunists* (limited and greedy spoilers) violently challenge the

ANSAs are not always roadblocks to peace. Sometimes, they may hold the key to resolving violent social conflict.

process, but may, under certain circumstances, be co-opted. Darby’s third category, *mavericks*, includes groups engaged in violence for personal gain rather than political motives; these

are essentially criminal groups, that is, VNSAs as opposed to ANSAs (recall the distinction drawn between VNSAs and ANSAs in Section 2, pp. 26–27), and, as such, have no equivalent in the typology presented in this analysis. Finally, *dealers* are those groups prepared to engage in negotiations in order to reach a settlement, the counterpart to our *partners*. While unquestionably an improvement on Stedman’s typology, Darby’s scheme still falls somewhat short. His four general categories (or *genera*, to use standard taxonomic ranks), while covering the field of militant groups and their standing relative to a peace process, fail to pick up the

nuanced differences among groups (or *species*) within the categories. The comprehensive typology introduced in the following pages attempts to offset these shortfalls.

Critical to defining the role identity of *partner* is a third dimension that distinguishes an actor's standing in relation to a peace process, alluded to at several points in Stedman's 1997 article: a party's commitment *to the peace process*. As with a party's commitment to its power ambitions (ref. Figure 10 above), there is a spectrum of commitment to a peace process, ranging from *none* for the outside spoiler, *tactical* for the inside spoiler, and *strategic* for the partner (see Figure 15):

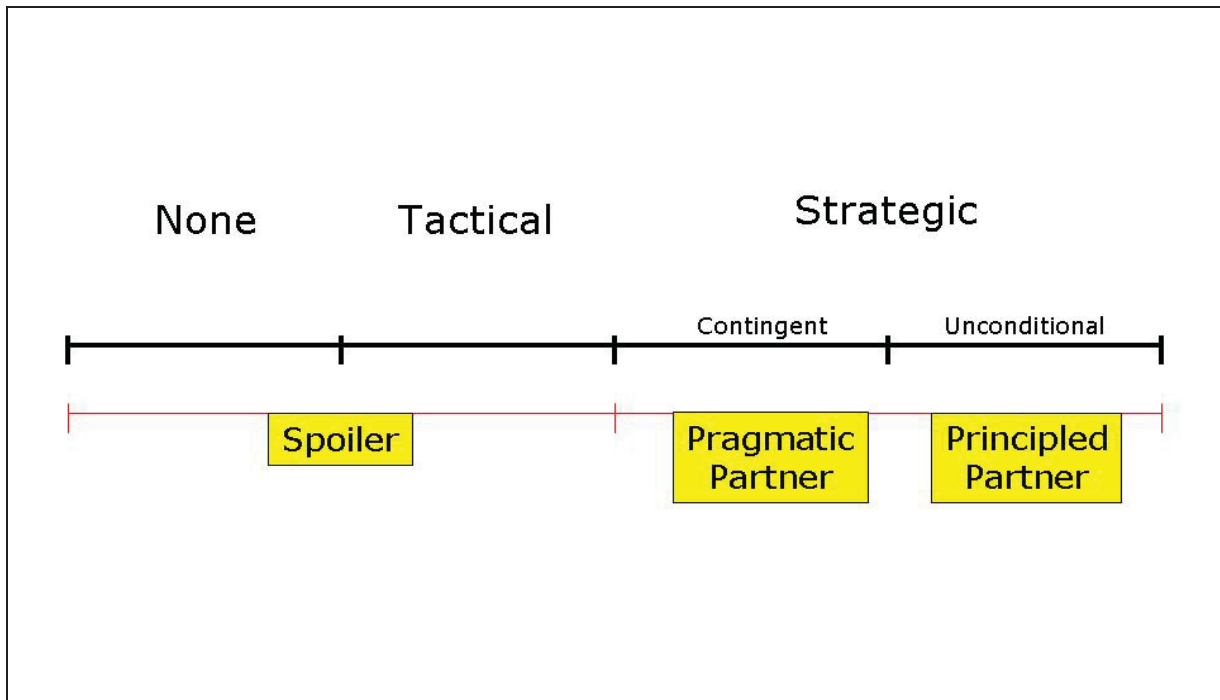


Figure 16: Spectrum of Commitment to the Peace Process.

Explicitly including this third dimension, we may define a *partner* as a party that pursues limited political ambitions and is willing to share political power with other actors (linking back to the Stakeholder at the grand strategic level). A partner's commitment to these limited ambitions, which it pursues from inside the peace process, may be unalterable (*high*) or pragmatic (*low*). But what distinguishes the partner from the spoiler is that a spoiler is not sincerely committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, while a partner's commitment over the long term is genuine. The partner has made a strategic commitment to peace, though not necessarily to a particular configuration of a peace settlement.

As with spoiler, there are variants within this broad category of partner. Two spring immediately to mind, depending upon the nature of the

A partner is a party that pursues limited political ambitions and is willing to share political power with other actors.

actor's commitment to the peace process: the *principled partner* and the *pragmatic partner*. The first is a party whose commitment to the peace process is unconditional. Its devotion to the success of the process is unwavering despite the inevitable bumps encountered along the way to a settlement. Put differently, a principled partner reposes sufficient trust and confidence in the process and in the other participants to remain engaged regardless of temporary setbacks. It sees peace and the social stability and security that come with it as an end in itself, the necessary environment within which it can work toward achieving its ambitions over the long term. Its limited political goals need not be completely satisfied in the immediate context of a peace settlement; it will compromise on these in order to secure an overall peace. Nevertheless,

ANSAs assume the strategic role of partner when they have made a strategic commitment to peace.

mechanisms must be in place (i.e., there must be some form of responsive, post-settlement political process) whereby the principled partner has at least a reasonable chance of realizing these ambitions over the long term.

To illustrate, recall PLO leader Yasir Arafat's actions in the aftermath of the Hebron massacre in 1994. On 25 February, Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler and member of the Jewish extremist group *Kach*, opened fire on hundreds of unarmed Muslim worshippers praying in the Ibrahim Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs, a site sacred to both Jews and Muslims alike, killing 29 people and wounding another 125. In rioting in the West Bank over the next two days, the IDF killed another 19 Palestinian protestors. Over Arafat's objections, the PLO executive committee voted on 1 March to suspend peace negotiations with Israel (the suspension lasted for a month). The government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin strongly condemned the terrorist attack, and Rabin subsequently tried to coax the Palestinians back to the negotiating table. Despite what could have been a fatal blow delivered to the fledgling Oslo peace process, Arafat's commitment to that process and his Israeli partners did not waver. Counter-terrorism expert Matthew Levitt (2008) recalled Arafat's reaction to the tragedy:

Arafat did, however, demonstrate considerable trust in his Israeli peace partners when he finally agreed to resume negotiations, despite Rabin's refusal to relocate the Israeli settlers in Hebron to [the] nearby [Israeli settlement of] Kiryat Arba. When former Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Liplin-Shahak, privately explained the political constraints



Figure 17: Cave of the Patriarchs. Source: "File: Israel Hebron," 2009.

preventing Rabin from removing the settlers (despite his personal desire to do so), a 'somber but composed and soft-spoken' Arafat responded: 'Tell Rabin that I understand his difficulties and that I expect he'll do what's necessary when the time is right.' In his announcement to the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators waiting in an anteroom, Arafat explained that 'Prime Minister Rabin is also

under pressure, and I trust him to make the right decision about the settlers.' (p. 51)

This is not the picture painted of Arafat in later years, when his commitment to the peace process increasingly came under question, especially during the second Intifada. Be that as it may, this incident is an apt example of behaviour consistent with what one would expect of a principled partner.

Secondly, we have the *pragmatic partner*. Like the principled partner, the pragmatic partner is committed to the ultimate success of the process. However, this commitment is contingent upon securing the limited goals to which it is highly committed or upon the continued flow of material and/or political rewards for compliant behaviour (Darby, 2001, p. 50). (Indeed, some groups may see these rewards as the primary goal of their participation in the peace process [Newman & Richmond, 2006, p. 5].) In other words, for the pragmatic partner, peace is instrumental; it is a means to an end. Commitment is also contingent on the prior or, at a minimum, simultaneous fulfillment of the other parties' obligations. The pragmatic partner does not have the same degree of trust and confidence in the process and the other participants as does the principled partner. Pragmatic partners are guided by the Missouri state sobriquet "Show Me"; confidence-building measures are essential in order to lessen suspicion and mistrust of the other parties' intentions.

This is especially true when it comes to measures of disarmament and demobilization, when the ANSA is faced with the fundamental transition from an armed to an unarmed non-state actor. Zahar (2003) remarks that "even adversaries who truly wish to resolve their wars remain wary of disarmament as weapons are their only means of protection against the unilateral defection of others" (pp. 116–117), especially when there are no muscular third parties to guarantee the

security of the participants during the high-risk period of transition from armed conflict to peace. In the early years of the Northern Ireland peace process, for example, the IRA missed several deadlines for decommissioning their weapons as required under the Good Friday agreement (April 1998). The IRA accused the British government of bad faith in failing to live up to its obligations under the accord, in particular, to reform the Royal Ulster Constabulary and to withdraw British troops from the North (Brown, 2001, para. 2). When a political crisis in July 2001 threatened the collapse of the Good Friday framework, the IRA relented and, in discussions with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, agreed in August on procedures to “put I.R.A. arms completely and verifiably beyond use,” in the words of commission chairman, Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain (Hoge, 2001, para. 5). In the event, it was not until September 2005 that de Chastelain could announce that “the decommissioning of the arms of the IRA is now an accomplished fact” (“IRA arms decommissioned,” 2005, para. 2).



Figure 18: Gen. Chastelain announces IRA decommissioning of arms. Source: “Profile: Gen John de Chastelain,” 2005.

Incorporating the category of *partner* allows us to expand the typology of ANSA roles at the strategic level. Stedman’s typology identified 8 strategic roles (ref. Table 1): the 4 spoiler types, each of which can be outside or inside the peace process. In our refined and expanded typology, we have a total of 16 *archetypical strategic roles* that an ANSA may assume in the context of intergroup conflict: Stedman’s 8 spoiler types, further classified by grand strategic role (Transformer, Captor, and Stakeholder) for a total of 12 spoiler types; and our 4 partner types (see Table 3):

Table 3: Comprehensive Typology.

Grand Strategic Role	Strategic Role	Goals	Commitment to Goals	Commitment to PP	
				Outside (O)	Inside (I)
Transformer (T)	Total Spoiler (TS)	Total	High	None 1. TS (T/O)	Tactical 9. TS (T/I)
Captor (C)	Total Spoiler (TS)	Total	High	None 2. TS (C/O)	Tactical 10. TS (C/I)
Captor (C)	Limited Spoiler (LS)	Limited	High	None 3. LS (O)	Tactical 11. LS (I)
Transformer (T)	Greedy Spoiler (GS)	Total	Low	None 4. GS (T/O)	Tactical 12. GS (T/I)
Captor (C)	Greedy Spoiler (GS)	Total	Low	None 5. GS (C/O)	Tactical 13. GS (C/I)
Captor (C)	Opportunistic Spoiler (OS)	Limited	Low	None 6. OS (O)	Tactical 14. OS (I)
Stakeholder (S)	Pragmatic Partner (PrgP)	Limited	High	Tentative 7. PrgP (O)	Contingent 15. PrgP (I)
Stakeholder (S)	Principled Partner (PrpP)	Limited	Low	Tentative 8. PrpP (O)	Unconditional 16. PrpP (I)

5 Strategies

5.1 Introduction

The comprehensive typology developed above illustrates the range of strategic roles ANSAs may adopt relative to a peace process set up to manage if not resolve intergroup conflict. Within the generic role identity of *spoiler*, we have at least 14 different variations and permutations. Beyond the *spoiler*, we have another four variants related to the *partner* role. This expanded typology of 16 archetypical strategic roles serves to reinforce the tremendous uncertainty and complexity we face when trying to accurately identify the type of ANSA with which we are engaged. Further complicating matters is the question of strategies. How do ANSAs enact these roles? What strategy or strategies do they use?

Both spoiler theory and CAF COIN doctrine highlight the use of violence as *the* strategy for achieving political change. Indeed, violence is seen as a defining characteristic of the spoiler and insurgent. Recall, Stedman (1997) defines *spoiler* as leaders and parties *who use violence* to undermine attempts to achieve peace (p. 5). He does not dwell in detail on spoiler strategies per se. Nevertheless, he identifies two general conceptual types, the specific configurations of which may differ according to circumstance. The Inside Spoiler employs *a strategy of stealth* in order to undermine a peace process, manifestly committing to the process while working behind the scenes for its demise. Violence is minimized—but not abandoned—so as not to abort the process with the loss of its attendant benefits (Stedman, 1997, p. 8).

The Outside Spoiler exercises no such self-restraint on the use of violence. This spoiler employs *a strategy of overt violence* (ibid.). The motivation for the use of violence may vary. It may be to force the spoiler's way into the negotiations, or it may be intended to bring the process crashing down (ibid., p. 17). Regardless of the intent, the operative means for the Outside Spoiler is violence.

To summarize, then, the place of violence in spoiler theory is clear-cut: a spoiler engages in violence, and violence is an unmistakable indicator of spoiling intent.

Likewise, CAF COIN doctrine identifies violence or the threat of violence as a key element in the profile of an insurgent group. It defines insurgency as “a competition involving at least one nonstate movement using means *that include violence* [emphasis added] against an established authority to achieve political change” (Canada/DAD, 2008, p. 1-2). While hinting in this definition that other, nonviolent tactics may be used, the insurgents' tactical repertoire “will

certainly [emphasis added] include violence or at the very least the threat of violence” (ibid., 1-13).

From spoiler theory & COIN doctrine, an ANSA engages in violence, and violence is an unmistakable indicator of destructive intent.

This single-minded focus on violence as an ANSA’s (whether spoiler or insurgent) “strategy of choice” is much too

restrictive. The reality, not surprisingly, is far more complex. An ANSA has a cornucopia of strategies from which to choose. And though violence is undeniably an integral part of this basket of strategies, nonviolent ways and means are equally important. For example, an ANSA may resort to non-violent action to weaken opponents or undermine a peace process. On the other hand, it may resort to violence in order, paradoxically, to support and sustain that process. Moreover, the conventional image of ANSAs as motivated solely by destructive intent overlooks a whole class of *constructive* strategies in which the positive strategic effect sought is to strengthen the “hard” and “soft” power capabilities of the ANSA and the community it purports to represent. Further complicating matters, the same strategy or strategies may reflect very different motivations—either destructive or constructive—making it exceedingly difficult to discern intentions from an ANSA’s overt strategic behaviour. The discussion that follows will elaborate on some of these complexities associated with ANSA strategies.

5.2 The Six Generic Strategies

To begin our investigation, recall the classic strategic paradigm *strategy = ends + ways + means*. *COIN Ops* (2008) describes the *ends* of an ANSA’s strategy as moving in “two concurrent complementary paths”:

- *Destructive*. “Destructive actions are clearly aimed at overthrowing the established order and creating a climate of collapse in the states’ authority. Destructive activities include subversion, sabotage of the economic framework, terrorism and guerrilla activity and large-scale combat operations.” (Canada/DAD, 2008, p. 2-15)
- *Constructive*. “The constructive effort, meanwhile, aims at creating an organization to subsequently replace the established order at a suitable moment.” (ibid.)

According to CAF COIN doctrine, an ANSA’s destructive and constructive strategies are synchronized towards achieving a common end: to topple the established order (*Destructive*) and, ultimately, to replace it with the ANSA’s own shadow administration (*Constructive*). Though

useful as a starting point, these definitions should be broadened. The definition of *Constructive*, in particular, is excessively narrow. It obliquely hints at the wide range of socially productive activities (e.g., charitable services, dispute resolution, local policing, etc.) in which ANSAs often engage. Moreover, it neglects those constructive activities (e.g., participation in peace and reconciliation processes) that facilitate power sharing with the ruling elite and/or other outgroups. Accordingly, we amend the above definitions as follows:

- *Destructive*. The ends or intended strategic effects of destructive actions are (a) to undermine a peace process, or (b) to weaken the hard power capabilities, sap the will, and erode the legitimacy (or soft power capabilities more generally) of an outgroup, whether the established authorities, its foreign allies, or other competing social groups.
- *Constructive*. The ends or intended strategic effects of constructive actions are (a) to strengthen a peace process, or (b) to enhance and sustain the hard and soft power capabilities, endurance, and legitimacy of the ingroup and the ANSA, in its self-assigned role as vanguard of the ingroup.

In simple terms, destructive strategies aim to *tear down*—whether a peace process or an outgroup—while constructive strategies seek to *build up*—whether a peace process, an ANSA, or the ingroup the ANSA claims to represent.

Strategies are also distinguished on the basis of their *ways* and *means*, more specifically:

- *Violent Action*. Methods involving the actual or threatened use of force so as to inflict physical or psychological injury or harm to persons or material damage to property as a first-order effect.
- *Non-violent Action*. Methods refraining from the actual or threatened use of physical force but intended nevertheless to produce compelling (positive or negative) psychological pressures on persons as a first-order effect.
- *Non-violent Co-option/Cooperation*. Methods refraining from the actual or threatened use of physical force but designed to neutralize or win over persons as a first-order effect.

Note that the boundaries between these categories are not hard and fast. The dividing line between violent and non-violent action is especially blurred in circumstances in which both seek in differing degrees to bring negative psychological pressure to bear on a target as a first-order effect. Moreover, non-violent action such as a labour strike or street demonstration may start out

peacefully but then escalate—unintentionally or, often, deliberately through the actions of *agent provocateurs*—to violent action like a riot.

Combining *ends* and *ways/means* yields the following six strategies (see Table 4):

Table 4: Six Generic ANSA Strategies.

		Ways		
		Violent Action [VA]	Non-violent Action [NVA]	Non-violent Co-option/Cooperation [NVC]
Ends	Destructive [D]	Strategy A (Attack Outgroup) <i>Means:</i> Active sabotage, terrorism, guerrilla activity, large-scale combat operations.	Strategy B (Subvert Outgroup) <i>Means:</i> Protest & persuasion, noncooperation, nonviolent intervention, passive sabotage, infiltration.	Strategy C (Deceive Outgroup) <i>Means:</i> Charities, clandestine & front organizations, peace & reconciliation processes, military truces & ceasefires, nominal disarmament & demobilization.
	Constructive [C]	Strategy D (Defend Ingroup) <i>Means:</i> Active sabotage, terrorism, guerrilla activity, large-scale combat operations.	Strategy E (Mobilize Ingroup) <i>Means:</i> Protest & persuasion, noncooperation, nonviolent intervention.	Strategy F (Sustain Ingroup) <i>Means:</i> Charities, front organizations, shadow government, peace & reconciliation processes, military truces & ceasefires.

5.3 Are These Strategies Individually Feasible?

In theory, an ANSA may choose any of these six generic strategies. But are they all *feasible*? A strategy is said to be *feasible*—that is, “capable of being done, accomplished, or carried out” (“Feasible,” 2012)—if its ends, ways, and means are *compatible*—that is, “capable of orderly, efficient integration and operation with other elements in a system with no modification or conversion required” (“Compatible,” 2012). Let us examine whether these strategies are individually feasible.

We need not dwell on the feasibility of strategies **A** and **B** since this is self-evident. Violent and non-violent activities are consistent with a destructive intent to weaken an opponent or outgroup, or, in the context of spoiler theory, to undermine a peace process. Likewise, strategies **E** and **F** are clearly feasible. Non-violent collective political action such as protests and demonstrations can strengthen an ingroup, energizing its members and awakening their sense of collective empowerment, which an ANSA can channel in its own support (**Strategy E**). The provision of essential goods (e.g., food, water, shelter, and fuel) and services (local policing, law administration, welfare and charitable services, etc.), especially in areas where the established

authorities have failed to do so, can win over the local populace and enhance the perception of the ANSA as a legitimate alternative to the current governing elite (**Strategy F**). Similarly, participation in peace and reconciliation processes, observance of military truces and ceasefires, and commitment to disarmament and demobilization measures can build outgroup confidence in the ANSA as a reliable partner and, ultimately, win it recognition as the legitimate representative of its ingroup (**Strategy F**).

The feasibility of the remaining two strategies, however, is not immediately apparent. For example, is it possible to weaken an opponent using *cooperative* means (**Strategy C**)? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. Non-violent cooperation can provide “top cover” for an ANSA’s destructive intent and is often used in conjunction with destructive strategies **A** and/or **B**. In spoiler theory, for example, an Inside Spoiler uses its participation in the peace process to deceive other parties as to its true intentions regarding peace and reconciliation. Acting as a “Trojan horse,” it publicly declares its commitment to peace, while working behind the scenes to chip away at the process and to sap the strength of its opponents. **Strategy C** amounts to *strategic deception* or, as Stedman calls it, a *strategy of stealth*, one that history shows is eminently feasible.

What of the feasibility of **Strategy D**? Is it realistic to imagine that violence can be used for anything other than destructive ends? Contrary to conventional wisdom, violence is not invariably destructive from a long-term strategic perspective. Nor is it an unfailing indicator of destructive intent. Paradoxically, violence can be used for strategically *constructive* purposes. It can be instrumental in initiating, supporting, and sustaining a peace process, as a way to mold the process in a manner more conducive to the ANSA’s interests and objectives. To elaborate, in the conflict resolution literature, negotiations are thought to be possible once a conflict is *ripe*. Zartman (2001) describes “ripeness” in the following terms:

The concept of a ripe moment centers on the parties’ perception of a Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS)...The concept is based on the notion that when the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degree or for the same reasons), they seek an alternative policy or Way Out. (p. 8)

As Zartman defines it, a *Mutually Hurting Stalemate* (MHS) exists when the belligerents have reached an impasse on the battlefield. Their relative military positions are deadlocked, though these positions need not necessarily be symmetrical; the stalemate, with its attendant costs in terms of unrelenting death and destruction, is such that neither belligerent can break it via

military action alone. In other words, victory in the strict military sense—establishing strategic dominance over the opponent through decisive military force—is beyond the grasp of the belligerents. Negotiations, then, emerge as a means to move beyond the military stalemate, that is, as a *Way Out*. This alternative does not have to be “a specific solution, only a sense that a negotiated solution is possible for the searching and that the other party shares that sense and the willingness to search too” (ibid., p. 9). The start-up of political talks is not guaranteed, however, even if both sides perceive themselves to be trapped in an MHS. Instead, the military stalemate may be frozen in place with no follow-on political efforts to resolve the underlying dispute—witness the unresolved division between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus or between North and South on the Korean peninsula. As Zartman (2001) notes, “ripeness is only a condition, necessary but not sufficient, for the initiation of negotiations...It must be seized, either directly by the parties or, if not, through the persuasion of a mediator” (ibid.). The key point here is that violence can support a peace process in so far as it creates the conditions of a Mutually Hurting Stalemate, a prerequisite for the initiation of negotiations.

Violence can support a peace process in so far as it creates the conditions of a Mutually Hurting Stalemate.

It can also be used by an ANSA to gain a seat at the table in ongoing negotiations by demonstrating that the group is a veto-holder and has the capacity to frustrate the implementation of any agreement from which it has been excluded. Indeed, many argue that these powerful outside veto-holders *must* be brought into the process if there is to be any chance of success (on this point with respect to the Northern Ireland peace process, see Mac Ginty, 2006, p. 153, and Darby, 2001, p. 188; with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, see Ní Cheallacháin, 2010, p. 51).

Once talks are underway, violent action may help move stalled negotiations forward. Assuming the belligerents have seized the ripe moment and have moved to the negotiating table, violence—or, more precisely, the *controlled application* of violence—may be used to break the logjams that inevitably arise in negotiations. **Strategy D** in these circumstances represents a form of “*beyond-the-table*” *negotiating tactics* (this term comes from Sisk, 1993). It serves as a means to signal frustration or dissatisfaction with the pace of negotiations, with the provisions of an emerging agreement, or with the failure of other parties to implement confidence-building measures or the terms and conditions of a settlement. It is a way to pressure other parties when they are perceived to be “dragging their feet.” Speaking in 2002, Khaled Mishal, chairman of Hamas’ Political Bureau, asked “if we stop military operations today, how will the [Palestinian] Authority exercise

pressure on Israel so that it would abide by what it is required to do?...If you stop resistance, there will be no pressure on Israel, and Israel without pressure does not give” (quoted in Ní

Violence can buy an ANSA a seat at the table or move stalled negotiations forward.

Cheallacháin, 2010, p. 50). An ANSA’s resort to violence creates uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety among the other parties and their

supporters and heightens their fears that a return to large-scale unrestricted violence is imminent. This collective angst can prompt calls for changes in negotiating position more accommodating to—or, in the extreme, surrendering to—the political demands of the group perpetrating the violence.

Violence, then, can be a constructive element of a peace process. As Newman and Richmond (2006) write,

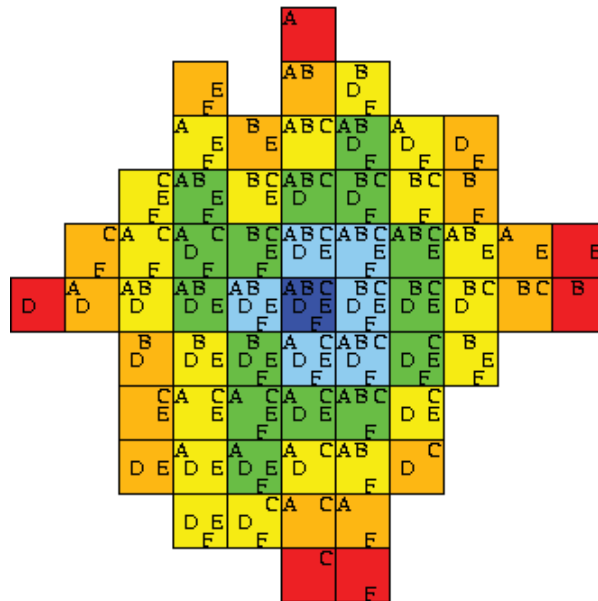
at its most productive, [violent behaviour] leads not to the end of a peace process, but to the inclusion of new sets of interests, the recognition of proto-political actors, and sometimes further concessions and the commitment of more international resources. By attenuating the process, everything remains on the table, and disputants still have access to all of the indirect resources a peace process provides: recognition, financial resources, and political legitimacy. (pp. 6–7)

Indeed, the pragmatic use of violence—an undeniably tough bargaining tactic—may be so much an accepted and normal part of negotiations in a given political culture that insiders may not even be aware that they are engaging in what others, especially outsiders to that society, see as spoiling behaviour.

Certainly, **Strategy D** is not without its risks. Rather than encouraging concessions or capitulation at the bargaining table, the use of violence may backfire on the ANSA, inducing other parties to dig in their heels and refuse to compromise until the violence has ended. In the extreme, it can provoke such popular anger as to fuel demands for a crackdown or all-out attack on the ANSA and its followers. Thus, the ANSA must calibrate the use of violence such that enough angst is roused in the target population to create popular pressure for cooperation and accommodation, but not so much as to blow back on the group and its supporters. This delicate balancing act may be difficult to achieve in practice. Indeed, the downside risks of this strategy may make it inadvisable in most circumstances. That does not, however, make it infeasible.

5.4 Insurgent Approaches and Strategy Sets

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, therefore, we argue that all six generic strategies identified in Table 4 are individually feasible. Moving on in our analysis, we make no a priori assumption that these six strategies are mutually exclusive; we allow that each strategy may be adopted in conjunction with the others, either in partial or full combination. The range of all possible combinations or sets of these six strategies can be visualized in terms of a Venn diagram (see Figure 18):



Source: Ruskey & Weston, 2005.

Figure 19: Venn Diagram of All Possible Strategy Sets.

There are 63 possible strategy combinations or sets, which in turn may be connected to five general insurgent approaches (four of which are enumerated in Canada/DAD, 2008a, pp. 2-7 to 2-8, and US/DoA, 2006, pp. 1-5 to 1-8). Before examining the strategy sets in more detail, let us briefly outline these approaches.

5.4.1 Conspiratorial Strategy

Small, clandestine cells (often “sleeper” cells buried deep within the military and security services) lie in wait to strike at a moment of government vulnerability, seizing key state installations in a *coup d’etat* meant to trigger an uprising of the masses in support of the

conspirators and against the ruling establishment. This was the strategy in the late 1970s/early 1980s of *al-Jihad al-Islami* (Egyptian Islamic Jihad—EIJ) led by Ayman al-Zawahiri (the following account is drawn from Wright, 2006, pp. 58–68). Aboud al-Zumar, a colonel in Egypt’s military intelligence and EIJ’s chief strategist, contrived an elaborate plan to assassinate Egypt’s leaders and to seize the Army and



Figure 20: EIJ militants assassinate President Anwar Sadat, 6 October 1981. Source: “Iconic Photos,” n.d.

State Security headquarters, telephone exchange building, and radio and TV building. Once in control of the key communications facilities (this was in the days before the emergence of social media), EIJ would publicly proclaim the start of the Islamist uprising, prompting Egyptians to revolt *en masse*. In the event, a member of an EIJ military cell, Lieutenant Khaled Islambouli, cobbled together a “hasty and opportunistic plan” (ibid., p. 58) to assassinate Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during a military review on 6 October 1981. Though he and his co-conspirators succeeded in killing the President, the shocking event did not ignite a mass uprising as expected. In fact, the group had made no preparations to follow up the assassination as per al-Zumar’s plan. Zawahiri himself claimed not to have known of the plot until scant hours before it was carried out. EIJ’s conspiracy to seize power in Egypt ultimately failed.

5.4.2 Urban Insurgency

This approach is organizationally similar to the conspiratorial strategy, with small, clandestine cells loosely arrayed in a “flat” organizational structure centred on a charismatic leader (“The Urban Threat,” n.d., p. 11; the following description comes largely from this article). Realizing that they cannot win militarily, urban insurgents resort to protracted campaigns of selective, high-profile acts of terror to get their message across; historically, the “terrorist bomb”—or, in the present day, the Improvised Explosive Device (IED)—is the weapon of choice. The insurgents hope through their actions to wear down and demoralize the government and its security forces and to provoke them into violent overreactions, thereby alienating a restive urban population that already senses a looming “climate of collapse” (ibid., p. 27). Secular groups tend to avoid soft civilian targets and mass casualties for fear of alienating the population. Religiously-motivated urban insurgents—more concerned with divine as opposed to popular support—tend to be indifferent to civilian casualties (or may indeed seek to maximize casualties among “unbelievers”), which gives them greater strategic latitude.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, also the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq—ISI) is a prime example of an urban insurgent group. Founded in October 2004 by the infamous and charismatic Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (killed in a US airstrike in June 2006), the group initially pursued a four-pronged strategy in opposition to the 2003 American invasion of Iraq:

- “isolate U.S. forces by targeting their international and coalition partners,”
- “deter Iraqi cooperation by targeting police stations, recruitment centers, and Iraqi politicians,”
- “target the rebuilding processes through high-profile attacks against civilian contractors and humanitarian aid workers,” and
- “inflame sectarian tensions by attacking Shiite targets and provoking retaliatory responses against Sunni communities.” (Kirdar, 2011, p. 4)

At its peak, AQI fielded some 15,000 fighters prior to the rise of the Awakening Movement (or *Sahwa*, a backlash among Sunni tribes against AQI excesses) in the summer of 2006 and the US troop surge in 2007. During the surge, AQI was pried out of its urban havens in Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Baqubah and pushed into remote areas of the country. Despite the setback, AQI proved resilient. Its forces have more than doubled from some 800 to 1,000 fighters in late



Figure 21: Site of a car bomb attack at Jadidat al-Shatt, Diyala province, 40 km north of Baghdad, 10 June 2013. Source: Markey, 2013.

2011 to roughly 2,500 in 2012 (Masters, 2013). Urban terrorist attacks attributed to AQI have increased in frequency and lethality along with the general upswing in violence since Sunni discontent with the Shia-led government flared in Anbar and other provinces in December 2012. On 10 June 2013, for example, multiple car bombings in four cities in central and northern Iraq and in two Baghdad suburbs killed at least 70 people. Though AQI did not claim responsibility, Iraqi

officials maintained that coordinated multi-city suicide bombing attacks such as these were the hallmark of the group (Markey, 2013).

5.4.3 Foco Theory (Focoist)

Foco theory (*foquisimo*) refers to “to the primacy given to the rural armed struggle centralized in the *sierra* with emphasis on subjective conditions” (Childs, 1995, p. 194, fn. 5; the following discussion is drawn largely from this excellent article). It grew out of a distorted reading of the Cuban Revolution (1953–1959) and can be traced over the period 1960–1967 through the guerrilla warfare writings of Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and, to a lesser extent, Fidel Castro. The term *foco* itself refers to “a small guerrilla band located in the mountains” (ibid.). In Guevara’s “after-action review” of the Revolution, he concluded that a *foco* of 30 to 50 dedicated revolutionaries is all that is needed to ignite a guerrilla war. The conduct of these revolutionaries must be above reproach: “the guerrilla fighter, as a person conscious of the role in the vanguard of the people, must have a moral conduct that shows him to be a true priest of reform” (Guevara, 1985, p. 80, quoted in Childs, 1995, p. 605).

Foco theory drew three basic lessons from the Revolution: (a) popular forces can win against the army, (b) it is not necessary to wait until all the conditions for making revolution exist—the insurrection can create them, and (c) in underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area of armed fighting (Guevara, 1985, p. 45, cited in Childs, 1995, p. 604). As for tactics, the *foco* relies in large part on provocation:



Figure 22: Fidel Castro and fellow revolutionaries in Cuban countryside. Source: “Fotos,” n.d.

The dictatorship tries to function without resorting to force. Thus, we must try to oblige the dictatorship to resort to violence, thereby unmasking its true nature as the dictatorship of the reactionary social classes. This event will deepen the struggle to such an extent that there will be no retreat from it. (Guevara, 1985, p. 95, quoted in Childs, 1995, p. 616)

The bottom line of *foco* theory is the primacy of the armed struggle. It precedes and crystallizes the political struggle (contrast this with *Protracted Popular War* below). Military action itself *creates* the conditions for popular uprising. Seeing the *foco*’s success on the battlefield, the people will rise up in its support.

Foco theory's record in practice has not been impressive. After his heady success in Cuba, Guevara turned his revolutionary sights to Africa. He led an expedition in support of Laurent-Désiré Kabila's insurrection in eastern Congo in 1965. This attempt to reconstruct the Cuban Revolution in the heart of Africa ended in disaster, Che himself abandoning the struggle after seven exhausting months. He moved on to Bolivia, where he was hunted down and murdered in 1967.

Historian Matt Childs argues that Nicaragua is the only country where *foco* theory has proved valid, largely because the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front—FSLN) aligned its strategy during the 1978–1979 Revolution closer to the reality of the Cuban Revolution rather than to the erroneous principles of *foquismo* dogma (Childs, 1995, p. 623). Laurent Kabila's second attempt at seizing power in central Africa 30 years later in the First Congo War (1996–1997) constitutes a rare, second *focoist* victory. As in Nicaragua, the success of Kabila's rebel group—*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire—AFDL)—was largely due to it hewing closer to the pattern of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions rather than to strict *focoist* principles. Indeed, one Nicaraguan adaptation—the need for “extensive foreign assistance” (ibid., p. 624)—was probably decisive in Kabila's ouster of the corrupt and widely unpopular regime of Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko. Political activist Jason Stearns writes that the AFDL was “[a] grandiose name for a group that initially had little political or military significance other than providing a smoke screen for Rwandan and Ugandan [military] involvement” in the Congo (Stearns, 2011, p. 89).

5.4.4 Protracted Popular War

In Mao Zedong's Theory of Protracted War, expounded in his 1937 book *On Guerrilla Warfare*, he saw revolutionary war as progressing through three phases:

- PHASE 1 STRATEGIC DEFENSIVE (ORGANIZATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND PRESERVATION). The objectives in this phase are (a) to mobilize the populace to build a mass movement, and (b) to begin building the military capability needed for the decisive operations to be conducted in PHASE 3 (see below). The organizational foundations for the insurgency are laid in this phase. The insurgents establish and consolidate base areas, usually in inaccessible—and, hence, defensible—rural areas. From here, they recruit, indoctrinate, and train cadres, as well as establish intelligence, operations, and support networks. They create front organizations linking them to other political groups and providing them with

the opportunity to subvert and weaken these potential competitors. In the later stages of this phase, they begin to assemble the rudiments of a shadow government.

Political activity is primary in PHASE 1. Political agents, propagandists, and agitators fan out from the base areas to the surrounding countryside to “persuade” and “convince” the local populace to provide support (e.g., food, intelligence, recruits, etc.) to the insurgents; in this way, a “protective belt of sympathizers” is woven around each base (Griffith, 1989, p. 20). The population is galvanized through participation in popular resistance action such as strikes and demonstrations. Military operations are sporadic, with terrorism being the principal activity; large-scale combat operations are deferred to PHASE 3. The aim of these terrorist attacks is to wear down government forces as well as to inspire the populace.

- PHASE II STRATEGIC STALEMATE/EQUILIBRIUM (PROGRESSIVE EXPANSION). In this phase, the political activity initiated in PHASE 1 intensifies. Political agents continue to indoctrinate the populace in the “liberated areas.” Local “home guards” or militia are formed, whose primary function is to protect the revolution. They control the local population through intimidation and the elimination of informers and collaborators. They serve as a back-up reserve for the guerrilla force (ibid., p. 21).

Through assassinations of local officials and other leading figures, insurgents attempt to disrupt the functioning of local authority structures and to undermine the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people. The insurgents’ shadow government then steps in to fill the gaps in governance and development that their violent actions created.

In this phase, the insurgents initiate a guerrilla war (i.e., irregular warfare). Small, highly mobile groups carry out decentralized operations over a wide area, attacking vulnerable military targets, such as isolated security outposts, and ambushing weak military columns. They maintain the initiative through superior local intelligence. Their harassing attacks are intended, in part, to psychologically wear down the enemy: “the mind of the enemy and the will of his leaders is a target of far more importance than the bodies of his troops,” observes BGen Samuel Griffith, translator of *On Guerrilla Warfare* (ibid., p. 23).

- PHASE III STRATEGIC COUNTEROFFENSIVE (DECISION OR DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY). In the final phase, the insurgents aim, through stepped-up political and military action, to destroy the government’s military and civil capacity and replace it with its own shadow government. Most significantly, the guerrilla force transitions to a conventional army in

order to engage the enemy in large-scale combat. In this phase, the conflict escalates to full-scale civil war.

Finally, we include a fifth approach that is not mentioned in either CAF or US Army/Marine Corps COIN doctrine, but whose omission contributes to the overly narrow, exclusively violent view of ANSAs. That approach is the *Non-violent Struggle*.

5.4.5 Non-violent Struggle

The aim of non-violent struggle is to restrict and sever the sources of power of the dominant elite, while mobilizing the latent power of the people, through the withdrawal of the latter's obedience and cooperation (Sharp, 2005, p. 39). Independent organizations and institutions (e.g., trade unions, business organizations, religious organizations, the bureaucracy, neighbourhoods, villages, etc.) form the structural basis—the “pillars of support”—for non-violent resistance. These groups are the agents through which mass action is mobilized. (ANSAs may also form part of this resistance structure if they have made the strategic decision to lay down their arms and engage in non-violent struggle, though always with the option of resuming the armed struggle if necessary.) The specific methods of non-violent action include *protest*, *noncooperation*, and *intervention*:

- *Protest and persuasion*. The people express opinions “by symbolic actions, to show their support or disapproval of an action, a policy, a group, or a government” (ibid., p. 41).
- *Noncooperation*. “[T]he people refuse to continue usual forms of cooperation or to initiate new cooperation” (ibid., p. 42).
- *Intervention*. The people “actively disrupt the normal operation of policies or the system by deliberate interference, either psychologically, physically, socially, economically, or politically” (ibid., p. 42).

The 25 January Revolution in Egypt—part of the Arab Spring that swept the Middle East in 2011—is a prominent recent example of nonviolent struggle. [Indeed, Gene Sharp, considered by many to be the “Clausewitz of nonviolent warfare” (Weber, 2004, p. 232), was one of the inspirations of the revolution. The leaders of Egypt’s 6 April Youth Movement stumbled onto his writings as they studied the lessons of the *Otpor!* movement in Serbia that used nonviolent struggle to topple the regime of Slobodan Milošević (Stolberg, 2011).] Inspired by the revolution in neighbouring Tunisia, Egyptians’ anger and frustration with three decades of authoritarian rule under President Hosni Mubarak erupted in a national Day of Anger on 25 January 2011. Millions joined in

nonviolent protests across the country, the largest held in Tahrir Square in the capital, Cairo. The old, “tame” opposition parties found themselves on the sidelines. Instead, the “pillars of support” for the revolution were grounded in a loose association of fresh new political forces—many led by young but politically inexperienced activists—including the 6 April Youth Movement, We Are All Khaled Said Movement, the National Association for Change under Mohamed ElBaradei, the 25 January Movement, and *Kefaya* (or The Egyptian Movement for Change). The Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the oldest and largest organized opposition group in Egypt, was slow off the mark in backing the revolution. Only on the third day of the protests (27 January) did the MB leadership announce its full support for the demonstrators, at the same time encouraging members of its youth wing to participate in the Friday of Anger protests planned for the next day. Throughout the revolt, the MB maintained a relatively low profile. It did not try to assume leadership of the opposition. As MB spokesman Rashad al-Bayoumi told the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, the group did not want the unrest to be seen as an Islamic revolution; rather, “this is a popular uprising by all Egyptians” (Steinvorth & Windfuhr, 2011). Nevertheless, MB members were in the forefront of protestors standing up to the regime’s repression. Hundreds of Brothers were arrested, and many were tortured at the hands of the security forces. On 2 February—a day that came to be known as the “Battle of the Camel”—its members had a major role in—and suffered many casualties among the 11 dead and over 600 injured—battling Mubarak supporters who flooded Tahrir Square wielding sticks, whips, and knives, some astride horses and camels (hence the name of the incident) (Fathi, 2012).



Figure 23: Protestors fight Mubarak supporters during the Battle of the Camel. Source: “Mubarak’s supporters,” 2011.

Despite the heavy-handed tactics of the government, it could not stave off the popular demands for change unleashed by the protests. President Mubarak, bowing to the inevitable, resigned on 11 February, handing over power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The revolution had demonstrated the power and effectiveness of nonviolent struggle as an opposition

approach to bring about fundamental political change.¹¹ (The success of subsequent street protests in securing the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi—the Egyptian military deposed the democratically-elected President on 3 July 2013, ostensibly in response to the demands of millions of protestors—casts a shadow on the promise of non-violent struggle as an alternative approach for initiating democratic change.)

5.5 The Strategy-Set Collection

Next, let us examine the strategy sets in more detail. Table 6 presented below and the table found in Annex A together list the 57 strategy sets or combinations derived from the six generic ANSA strategies outlined in Table 4 (this latter Table is reproduced here for ease of reference in the subsequent discussion).

Table 4: Six Generic ANSA Strategies.

		Ways		
		Violent Action [VA]	Non-violent Action [NVA]	Non-violent Co- option/Cooperation [NVC]
Ends	Destructive [D]	Strategy A (Attack Outgroup) Means: Active sabotage, terrorism, irregular warfare (guerrilla activity, asymmetric warfare), large-scale combat operations.	Strategy B (Subvert Outgroup) Means: Protest & persuasion, noncooperation, nonviolent intervention, passive sabotage, infiltration.	Strategy C (Deceive Outgroup) Means: Charities, clandestine & front organizations, peace & reconciliation processes, military truces & ceasefires, nominal disarmament & demobilization.
	Constructive [C]	Strategy D (Defend Ingroup) Means: Active sabotage, terrorism, irregular warfare (guerrilla activity, asymmetric warfare), large-scale combat operations.	Strategy E (Mobilize Ingroup) Means: Protest & persuasion, noncooperation, nonviolent intervention.	Strategy F (Sustain Ingroup) Means: Charities, front organizations, shadow government, peace & reconciliation processes, military truces & ceasefires.

The following section briefly explains the construction and interpretation of the tables in which these strategy sets are outlined. Consider, for example, **Strategy Set AB**, presented in Table 5:

¹¹ Though largely nonviolent on the part of the protestors, the government response was anything but peaceful. Amnesty International (2011) later reported that at least 840 people were killed and another 6,467 injured during the two-and-a-half week revolution.

Table 5: ANSA Strategy Sets (Example).

Strategy Set	Description	Insurgent Approach
AB	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Passive Sabotage	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>

Column 1 identifies the **Strategy Set**, in this case **AB**—the combination of the first two generic ANSA strategies **A** and **B**. From Table 4, the shorthand reference for **Strategy A** is “Attack Outgroup.” It is characterized by Destructive ends, that is, the strategic effects sought are to weaken the outgroup and/or block progress in the peace process. The ways consist of Violent Action, and the means—or *tactics, techniques, and procedures* (TTPs)—range from active sabotage¹², terrorism, and guerrilla activity to large-scale combat operations. **Strategy B**—shorthand reference “Subvert Outgroup”—strives to achieve the same destructive strategic effects as **Strategy A**. However, the ways in this strategy are restricted to Non-violent Action, with the TTPs ranging from protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention to passive sabotage and infiltration of the security forces and governmental and political institutions.

Column 2 provides a short **Description** of the strategy set. The first line gives the shorthand references for the strategies included in the set. So, **Strategy Set AB** is described as “Attack Outgroup [A] + Subvert Outgroup” [B]. An example of the TTPs representative of each strategy is presented on the second line, in this instance “Terrorist Bombing” for the “Attack Outgroup” strategy [A] and “Passive Sabotage” for the “Subvert Outgroup” strategy [B].

¹² COIN Ops (2008) distinguishes active and passive sabotage in the following terms:

Active sabotage sees insurgents set out to disrupt important services, functions or industrial processes by violent means. Targets may be selected at random for political or economic impact, or they may fit into a wider tactical plan with the aim of increasing general confusion and tying down troops in the static defence of installations. Suitable targets include bridges, roads, telephone lines or dispersed military logistics sites. Targets whose destruction might cause mass unemployment and thereby lose the goodwill of the people are in general avoided...*Passive sabotage* is generally aimed at causing disorder and disruption by deliberate error, contrived accident, absenteeism or strikes. The target can be industry, public services, supplies or troops, where action is usually planned on a wide scale through political front organizations. Data sabotage is facilitated by the universality of computers in government, business and industrial control systems. These can be carried out through cyber attack or by having an insurgent or sympathizer physically damage the system. (2-15 to 2-16)

Finally, Column 3—**Insurgent Approach**—links the strategy set to one of the five insurgent approaches outlined above, based on this author’s subjective assessment of the approach with which the mix of TTPs set out in Column 2 seem to be most consistent.

Table 6 presents a sample of the strategy-set collection: all 15 binary sets or combinations of two strategies **A** through **F** (the remaining 40 strategy sets in the collection are found in Annex A):

Table 6: ANSA Binary Strategy Sets.

Strategy Set	Description	Insurgent Approach
AB	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Passive Sabotage	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
AC	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Clandestine Organization	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
AD	Attack Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing	<i>Urban</i>
AE	Attack Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
AF	Attack Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BC	Subvert Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup e.g., Passive Sabotage + Clandestine Organization	<i>Conspiratorial</i>
BD	Subvert Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Passive Sabotage + Terrorist Bombing	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
BE	Subvert Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike	<i>Non-violent Struggle</i>
BF	Subvert Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Non-violent Struggle</i>

CD	Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Clandestine Organization + Terrorist Bombing	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
CE	Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Clandestine Organization + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
CF	Deceive Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
DE	Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g. Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
DF	Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
EF	Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Non-violent Struggle</i>

Note that the TTP selected for each strategy is only one of several possible means that could have been chosen. For example, for **Strategy Set AB**, we could have selected “large-scale combat operations” for **Strategy A** and “general labour strike” (in which labour ceases work in all industries simultaneously) for **Strategy B**. **Strategy Set AB**, then, would be described in Column 2 as “Large-scale Combat Operations + General Labour Strike,” a mix of TTPs more closely aligned with PHASE 3—PROTRACTED POPULAR WARFARE than with the CONSPIRATORIAL or URBAN insurgent approaches as currently listed for this strategy set in Column 3 of Table 5.

What this example demonstrates is that, within each strategy set, there is any number of variants depending on the range of available TTPs for the constituent strategies, variants which are not necessarily connected to the same insurgent approach. In other words, there is no singular, definitive configuration of TTPs for any given strategy set, nor is there one and only one insurgent approach to which each strategy set is exclusively linked. Conversely, there is a wide range of strategy sets that is compatible with any given insurgent approach; for example, in Table 6, six

strategy sets were judged to correspond to the CONSPIRATORIAL and/or URBAN insurgent approaches.

The strategic repertoire from which an ANSA may choose is extremely rich and varied.

To recap, then, we have six independent, feasible strategies, for each of which there are any number of variants depending on the available ways/means or TTPs. These strategies may be variously combined to form 63 kaleidoscopic strategy sets, connected to one or more of five insurgent approaches. This drives home the key point to be taken from the preceding analysis: the strategic repertoire from which an ANSA may choose is extremely rich and varied, and, hence, its behaviour in any given circumstance is difficult to predict *a priori*.

5.5.1 An Application—The Afghan Taliban’s Strategy Set

To illustrate the practical application and implications of the strategy-set collection, let us consider the example of the Afghan Taliban’s strategy set as it has emerged in 2013. The Taliban appears to be simultaneously pursuing a two-pronged approach along the political and military fronts.

The Political Front

The most significant development in the first half of the year was the opening of a political office in Doha, the Qatari capital, on 18 June 2013, as a prelude to the resumption of formal negotiations with the US.¹³ The two dozen-plus members of the delegation come from the Taliban’s political wing; none has a military background. According to a Taliban ground commander, they were chosen after intense deliberation



Figure 24: Office of the Afghan Taliban, Doha, Qatar. Source: AP Photo/Osama Faisal, in AFP, 2013.

¹³ Qatar and others have reportedly provided \$100 million to support its operations (Nordland & Rubin, 2013a).

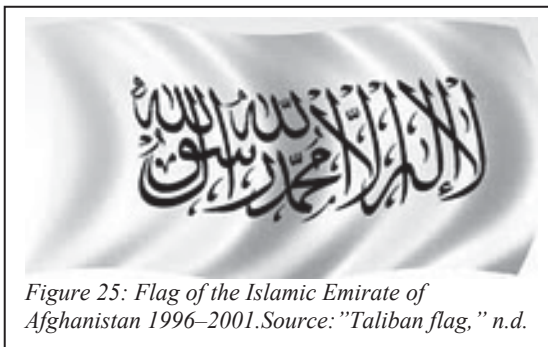
within the leadership, on the basis of their loyalty to Mullah Omar, their experience in diplomacy, and their fluency in at least one foreign language (Nordland & Rubin, 2013a).

The decision to open a political bureau in Doha had originally been taken on 3 January 2012. However, the opening was delayed when the Taliban suspended preliminary talks with the Americans on 15 March 2012. The initial discussions between the two sides had focused on confidence-building measures, specifically, on a prisoner exchange in which five senior Taliban leaders held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, were to be released to house arrest in Qatar in exchange for US prisoner-of-war (POW) Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl (captured in Afghanistan in June 2009). The Taliban accused the US of reneging on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) concerning the prisoner exchange and introducing new conditions that contradicted the terms of the MoU. The Taliban deemed these new conditions unacceptable. “So it was due to their alternating and ever changing position that the Islamic Emirate was compelled to suspend all dialogue with the Americans” (“Afghan Taliban Suspends Talks,” 2012). As the initial role of the political office had been to support talks over the prisoner exchange, the bureau lost its *raison d’être* when the Taliban broke off negotiations.

Despite the suspension of preliminary talks, contacts between the sides carried on behind the scenes. For example, Taliban officials met outside Paris on 20 December 2012 for two days of informal meetings with Afghan government peace negotiators and representatives of the former Northern Alliance militias and the militant group *Hezb-e-Islami*. The discussions, organized by the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research, were described by a French Foreign Ministry spokesman as an “academic seminar” rather than formal peace talks (Sayare & Rosenberg, 2012, para. 5), with the participants attending on a personal basis. Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, said delegation leader Shahabuddin Delawar’s sole task was “to shed light on our stances and explain our official position and policies to the international community. We want to explain it directly through our own official representatives to the international community, while in the past our position has been presented by the enemies, who were trying to display a wrong image” (ibid., para. 9). Further informal contacts were facilitated in the intervening months by diplomats and other intermediaries from Germany, Norway, and the UK; Pakistan also reportedly was instrumental in encouraging the Taliban to return to the negotiating table. Finally, in the third week of May, Qatari officials informed Washington that the Taliban might be prepared to resume talks (Rosenberg & Rubin, 2013).

Though the US was anxious to restart the talks, as a key pillar in its Afghanistan exit strategy, it insisted that the Taliban satisfy certain minimum preconditions. This the group did, at least in word. In the statement read at the inauguration of the political office, Taliban spokesman

Muhammad Naim said that the Taliban's military and political goals "are limited to Afghanistan." The group would "not allow anyone to threaten the security of other countries from the soil of Afghanistan," and it sought "a political and peaceful solution" to the conflict (ibid.). This wording was consistent with prior US conditions for negotiations, first and foremost that the Taliban break any ties with al Qaeda. Ultimately, over the course of the peace process, the US hopes to persuade the Taliban to disarm and to accept the Afghan constitution, with minor modifications possible but no compromise on fundamentals, in particular, the protection of women and minority rights (ibid.). However, US officials are realistic as to the hurdles that must be overcome to reach a peace settlement, with a senior Administration official remarking that "[t]here is no guarantee that this [achieving substantive results] will happen quickly, if at all" (ibid.).



Controversy surrounded the political office from the start. At the official June opening ceremony, Taliban officials raised the group's flag (the Islamic creed in black embossed on a white background—see Figure 24); they had also mounted a plaque reading the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" beside the building entrance (this was the name of the Taliban government when it controlled most of Afghanistan prior to its ouster in 2001). The US claimed this violated the "agreement" on the conditions for opening the office (Nordland & Gordon, 2013). Taliban officials rejected the charge: "No such agreement has been signed [with the US], nor does such an agreement exist, although documents have been exchanged between the Islamic Emirate and the Qatari government regarding conditions of the office," the Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naim told the media (Rising, 2013). He insisted that "The raising of the flag and the use of the name of Islamic Emirate were done with the agreement of the Qatari government" (ibid.). Kabul protested and demanded that these symbols of state be removed. President Karzai canceled plans to send an Afghan government delegation to Doha, and he suspended talks with the US on a long-term security pact, chastising the Americans for failing to ensure that the Taliban lived up to the purported agreement. The flag was later hoisted on a lower flagpole not visible beyond the compound walls, and, eventually, both the flag and sign-board were moved inside the building (Nordland & Rubin, 2013b). Nevertheless, it was a rocky start to difficult negotiations in which a peaceful settlement is by no means an assured outcome.

What does the Taliban hope to achieve through the opening of this office? In an interview, Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naim set out the five main objectives for the office:

1. Negotiations and understanding for improving the relations with the world countries.
2. Supporting a political solution which could guarantee the end of Afghanistan's occupation and establishing an independent Islamic system of life there which is the aspiration and demand of the entire nation.
3. Meetings with the Afghans in accordance with the need of time.
4. Making contacts with the United Nations, international and regional organizations and nongovernmental organizations.
5. Issuing political statements regarding the existing political situation and providing them to the media. ("Afghan Taliban website," 2013)

Apart from its immediate role with respect to supporting the peace talks, the barely-concealed mission of the office is to serve as the Taliban's embassy to the international community. The Taliban is sensitive to, and takes pains to stress, the symbolic importance of the office: in their view, its very existence is a recognition that the Islamic Emirate "is a fact and a ground reality...[and] a political force on the international level" (ibid.). Outside observers tend to agree with this assessment. Vali Nasr, a Middle East specialist and dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, concedes that the opening of the Doha office allows the Taliban to "come out in the open [and] engage the rest of the region as legitimate actors, and it will be very difficult to prevent that when we [the US] recognize the office and are talking to the office" (Rosenberg & Rubin, 2013). The Taliban has come to appreciate that international recognition as a legitimate actor on the Afghan political stage is essential if the group is to have any role in governing the country after the coalition combat mission ends in 2014. As a Western diplomat based in Kabul observed, "If they have any long-term plan to be involved in running Afghanistan, international recognition is an important part even if they aren't going to come to the table with real offers of peace at this point" (ibid.).

The Taliban's negotiating strategy centres on talks with the Americans before meeting with Afghan officials. Why this initial focus on a dialogue with the Americans? According to Mohammad Naim, Afghanistan faces a dilemma, the external aspect of which relates to foreigners and the occupation, and the internal aspect of which relates to Afghans. He argues that the internal cannot be addressed before the external has been resolved ("Afghan Taliban website," 2013). As per the third objective listed above, the Taliban will engage in discussions with Afghan parties "according to the exigency of the situation" (ibid.). As for the talks with the Americans, Naim indicated that the preliminary meetings would consist of an exchange of views only. He wouldn't provide specific points as to the agenda; however, a prisoner exchange, he said, would definitely be discussed (alluding to the five-for-one exchange that had been the subject of talks

with the US prior to their suspension in March 2012). Elsewhere, another Taliban spokesman from the Doha office Mohammad Sohail Shaheen, speaking on Al Jazeera English, indicated that a ceasefire could also be an item on the agenda (“Taliban: No ceasefire with US,” 2013).

Apart from the opening of its Doha political office, the Taliban has engaged in other constructive political strategies in 2013. For example, in a communiqué posted on the group’s website on 13 May 2013, it announced the release of four of eight Turkish engineers captured on 22 April when bad weather forced their helicopter to make an emergency landing in an insurgent-controlled area of Logar Province (Ahmed, 2013a). In a gesture “showing its good will, human and Islamic sympathy and regard for the Muslim Turkish Nation,” the Taliban set the four free with promises that the remaining four would be released shortly thereafter (in the event, they were freed on 14 May) (“Afghan Taliban Releases 4 Turkish Captives,” 2013).

In another move seemingly intended to reinforce its image as a responsible actor, the Taliban announced in a statement in Arabic posted on its website on 13 May 2013 that it would cooperate with a national polio vaccination campaign. Recognizing that, according to global medical opinion, childhood vaccination was the only preventive treatment for polio, the Taliban promised to allow the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to conduct a preventive vaccination campaign, as long as the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) adhered to two conditions: (a) they used “unbiased” local people rather than foreigners, and (b) the NGOs must respect “Islamic fundamentals and traditions.” If they accepted these conditions, the Taliban would order its *mujahideen* “not to put hurdles in their way and rather offer them help” (“Afghan Taliban Sets Policy,” 2013). Contrast this approach with that of the Pakistan Taliban. Nine polio vaccinators—most of them women volunteers—were murdered over the course of four days in December 2012 during a nationwide vaccination drive, prompting the WHO and UNICEF to suspend their campaign in that country (Walsh & McNeil, Jr., 2012).

Yet, for every step forward in portraying itself as a responsible, restrained liberation force, Taliban extremists seem to take two self-destructive steps backward. According to a spokesman for the governor’s office in Kandahar Province, a local elder reported that Taliban militants had beheaded a 16-year-old boy in Maiwand District in early June. They seized the boy when he visited a shrine in an area under Taliban control. It was thought that the militants murdered the boy because he was a regular visitor to the Afghan Local Police check post in the district, a local security force much hated by the Taliban (Rubin & Sahak, 2013).

The Military Front

Despite its apparent willingness to resume political negotiations and its engagement of other constructive political strategies, the Taliban has not yet renounced the use of force. Indeed, Taliban spokesman Mohammad Sohail Shaheen, in an interview with Al Jazeera English, stated explicitly that the Taliban “simultaneously follows political and military options...[the] attacking will continue in parallel with peaceful talks for peace.” At present, there is no ceasefire, he insisted, though this could be an item on the agenda at the peace talks. The “reason for the war is the occupation,” Shaheen continued. “When the occupation ends, everything will end” (“Taliban: No ceasefire with US,” 2013).

Events on the ground confirm that the Taliban’s military option is very much alive. Prior to the official launch of its annual spring offensive, Armed Opposition Group (AOG)¹⁴ activity in the first quarter of 2013 had been particularly intense. AOG-initiated attacks numbered 2,331, a 47 percent increase from the first quarter of 2012 (see Figure 25; these statistics come from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office and have not been officially confirmed, since the US military and the Afghan defence ministry reportedly refuse to release data on current-year attacks). This “further escalation in the perpetual stalemate” (ANSO, 2013, p. 1) that characterizes the conflict promises to make 2013 second only to 2011 as the most violent year in the Afghan war (ibid., p. 9).

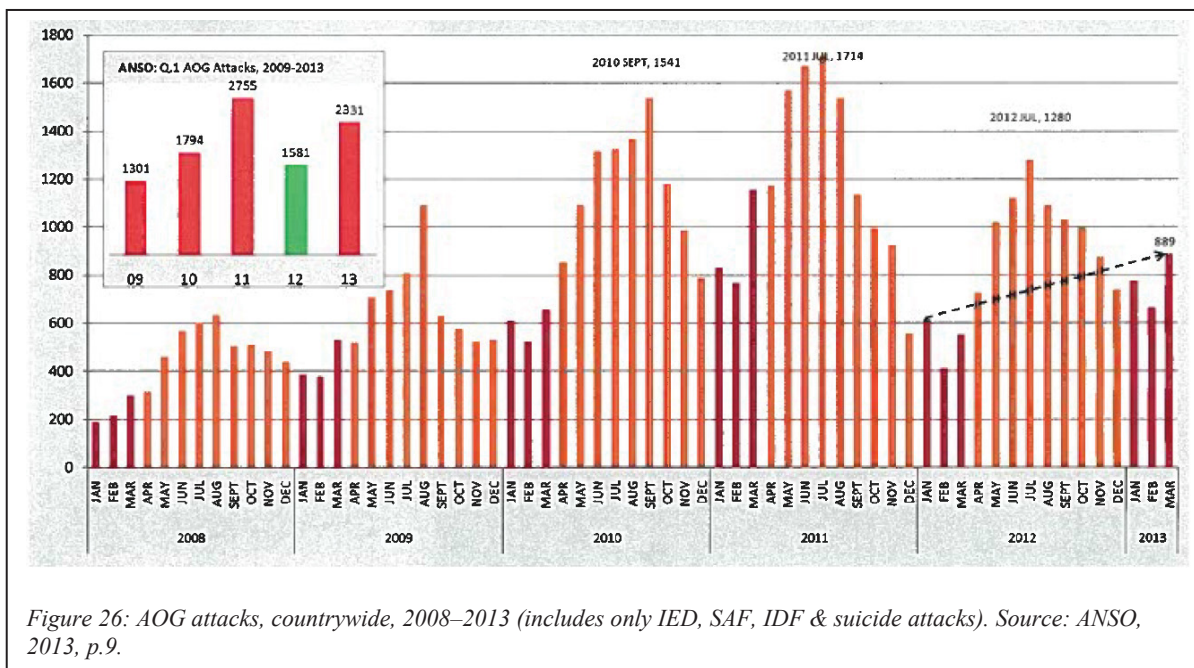


Figure 26: AOG attacks, countrywide, 2008–2013 (includes only IED, SAF, IDF & suicide attacks). Source: ANSO, 2013, p.9.

¹⁴ The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office defines Armed Opposition Group (AOG) to include the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban), Haqqani Network, and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG).

Attacks in the first quarter revealed a significant shift in the Taliban's targeting strategy, away from foreign forces and onto the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): 73 percent of attacks targeted the ANSF, with an additional 10 percent against Afghan civilians linked to the government; only 4 percent were directed against international military forces (ibid.). An Afghan Ministry of Defense official, speaking confidentially, said that, according to ministry data, 1,183 Afghan soldiers had been killed in the year ending 20 March 2013, a 40 percent increase over the 841 casualties for the year ending 20 March 2012 (Nordland, 2013a). He also reported that AOG casualties over the same 2012/2013 period amounted to 4,664 killed and 6,401 captured. Most Western observers estimate Taliban active strength at 20,000–25,000 fighters, casting doubt on the Ministry's AOG casualty figures, as this represents over half the active strength of the group (ibid.).

On 27 April 2013, the Leadership Council of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan posted a statement on the group's website announcing that its spring offensive would begin the next day.¹⁵ It named this "monumental spring operation" after General Khalid bin Waleed, a companion of the Prophet known as the "Drawn Sword of God." He is credited with defeating the eastern Roman empire at the battles of Damascus and Yarmouk. The leadership prayed that Allah would bless and grant final success to this year's jihadi operations "in defeating this era's western invaders" ("Afghan Taliban announces start," 2013).

The announcement also laid out in general terms the TTPs Taliban fighters would use in the campaign:

1. *Special military tactics and collective martyrdom operations*—suicide attacks—on international military force bases, diplomatic centers, and airbases.
2. *Insider attacks* (or, in NATO parlance, *green-on-blue attacks*) carried out "by infiltrating Mujahideen inside enemy bases in a systematic and coordinated manner."¹⁶

¹⁵ April 28th is an auspicious date for Afghans. Known as *Mujahideen Victory Day*, it commemorates the day in 1992 when rebel forces toppled Mohammad Najibullah, President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The Taliban statement referred to this date as the "day of triumph of our holy jihad against communism" ("Afghan Taliban announces start," 2013). The implied analogy to Karzai regime is self-evident.

¹⁶ In 2012, there were 44 such attacks against ISAF personnel, accounting for 15% of coalition deaths (Roggio, 2013b). Seven such attacks have been reported to 8 June 2013, though this estimate is likely to be low as some attacks go unreported and official data remains classified. For reported attacks, seven ISAF soldiers and two civilians were killed, representing 11 percent of ISAF deaths to date (Roggio, 2013a).

3. “Every possible tactic will be utilized in order to detain or inflict heavy casualties on the foreign transgressors.” (ibid.)

Despite the promise (or threat) to use “every possible tactic,” that was not a “green light” for fighters to operate without any restraint. The leadership statement set out the general rules of engagement for the military campaign. It called on the *mujahideen* to protect the lives and property of civilians as well as national resources and public welfare establishments. At the same time, it warned Afghan civilians to stay away from bases and residential areas of foreign forces, and to stop working with the foreigners in order to avoid falling victim to military attacks. Taliban spokesman Mohammad Sohail Shaheen reiterated these rules of engagement in his June 2013 al Jazeera English interview. He insisted that the Taliban’s policy is to attack only military targets and that Mullah Omar had ordered all ground commanders to prevent civilian killings and to target military installations. He claimed that the Taliban investigates incidents where civilians have been killed. Further, the group had proposed to the UN and NATO that a joint team be set up to investigate such incidents, with punishment for those found responsible for civilian deaths (“Taliban: No ceasefire with US,” 2013) (see Box 2).

Box 2. The Taliban and Civilian Casualties

On 11 June, Jan Kubis, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative, issued a statement saying the Taliban had recently signaled a willingness to talk about limiting civilian casualties: “I can confirm that we received signals about their willingness and readiness to discuss this issue with us...I welcome this” (Nordland, 2013b). Through public and private channels, the UN had sought to engage the Taliban in discussions on civilian casualties. “Now we are discussing modalities, how hopefully to start this dialogue, sooner rather than later,” Kubis said. “We need to come to an understanding how to do this; as you know it’s not that simple to have a meeting between the two of us” (ibid.). The talks would focus only on the issue of civilian casualties and would not be expanded to broader peace initiatives.

According to UN data, the Afghan conflict claimed 3,092 civilian casualties in the first five months of 2013, a 24 percent rise over the comparable period last year, with Afghan insurgents held responsible for three-quarters of the deaths and injuries. Most alarmingly, children accounted for 21 percent of the total in 2013, a 30 percent increase over 2012, and a development the UN Special Representative decried as “unacceptable.” Over this period, civilian casualties caused by IEDs surged 41 percent, while assassinations attributed to insurgent forces soared 42 percent; on the opposite side of the ledger, civilian casualties resulting from coalition airstrikes fell 30 percent. The Taliban angrily rejected the UN’s accusation. The group’s spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid warned that the UN “should not act as a propaganda machine for the invaders in Afghanistan” (ibid.).

In addition to insider attacks, the statement also announced other subversive measures designed to “hollow out” the regime. It called on officials of the Karzai administration to defect, promising to protect those who did. It also called on key Afghan leaders—religious figures, tribal elders, and other influential leaders—to dissuade young people from joining the regime’s security forces (“Afghan Taliban announces start,” 2013).

A key element of the Khalid bin Waleed campaign has been attacks on the capital city, Kabul. Since the launch of the campaign, the Taliban has engaged in a series of *complex* or *coordinated*

Box 3. Complex, Coordinated, and High-Profile Attacks

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) defines these three types of attacks as follows:

Complex Attack: "An attack conducted by multiple hostile elements which employ at least two distinct classes of weapon systems (i.e. indirect fire and direct fire, IED and surface to air fire) against one or more targets" (Jacobson, 2011).

Coordinated Attack: "An attack that exhibits deliberate planning, conducted by multiple hostile elements, against one or more targets from multiple locations. A coordinated attack may involve any number of weapon systems" (ibid.).

What distinguishes these two types of attack are indications of prior preparation. A coordinated attack shows evidence of long-term planning, whereas a complex attack does not. It is difficult from media reports to gauge the extent to which the attacks on the capital are the culmination of deliberate planning (*coordinated attack*) as opposed to a more loose and haphazard comingling of attack elements (*complex attack*).

High-profile Attacks. "Explosive Hazard event types, where only IED explosions were taken into account. We do not consider IED found & cleared or premature detonations. Only IEDs that actually exploded in an attack are taken into account. The primary method of attack for high profile attacks are [sic] Person-borne IED (PBIED), Suicide-borne IED (SVBIED) and Vehicle-borne IED (VBIED)" (ibid.).

ISAF uses the term *high-profile attack* in a way different from that used in this analysis. For ISAF, a high-profile attack is one in which some type of IED is used. Here, high-profile attack refers to the media exposure an attack against a target of significance can be expected to have.

attacks (see Box 3) involving small teams of gunmen and suicide bombers attacking high-profile targets in tandem—generally, the suicide bomber(s) tries to open an attack corridor in the security perimeter surrounding a target, through which the gunmen subsequently follow. These attacks have achieved little in a military sense. Indeed, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has thus far responded competently in promptly containing and eliminating these small-scale attacks.¹⁷ However, the tactical outcome—i.e., whether an attack succeeds or fails on the ground—is not the sought-after first-order effect. These attacks are part of a highly sophisticated *Propaganda of the Deed* (POTD) strategy. Adopted in 2006, the POTD strategy has become the "key component" in the Taliban's insurgency (Mackinlay, 2008). In this strategy, the Taliban engages in high-profile attacks that have little tactical significance but can be strategically significant due to the high visibility and/or the symbolic importance of the target. Military action is coordinated with a pre-arranged propaganda message. In flashing images of these high-profile attacks around the world, the traditional media facilitates (often unwittingly) the transmission of the Taliban's prepared strategic message, an effect that, in 21st century warfare, is amplified exponentially through social media. In the first two months of the Khalid bin Waleed campaign, the Taliban conducted five high-profile POTD attacks

¹⁷ Though not without cost. The Afghan Interior Ministry said 299 police officers have been killed and another 617 injured from May 10 through June 13 (Ahmed, 2013b).

in the Afghan capital:

1. *International Organization for Migration (May 24th)*. Six insurgents attacked the residential compound of the International Organization for Migration, an independent agency that has worked with the UN in Afghanistan in the past. The compound is located in the heart of the Afghan capital, close to the UN's main facility, an Afghan Public Protection Force post, and a hospital for the national intelligence service. At least four people were killed and 13 wounded in the assault. Hundreds of officers from the Afghan police's Quick Reaction Force and other units battled with the attackers for several hours before killing them all. In a telephone statement, a Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed that the compound was a CIA training center (Nordland & Sahak, 2013).

2. *Kabul International Airport (June 10th)*. Shortly before dawn, seven attackers assaulted Kabul International Airport, forcing the cancellation and rerouting of civilian flights. They had taken up positions in a tall building under construction north of the airport, shooting at the side of the airport maintained by American and other international forces. In the four-hour firefight that ensued, all seven attackers were killed; no Afghan security personnel died. A Taliban spokesman claimed responsibility for the attack. However, an Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said that the attackers' tactics and the fact that some wore security uniforms suggested that the Haqqani Network, a group affiliated with the Taliban and responsible for previous attacks in the capital, was involved (Rubin & Sahak, 2013).

3. *Supreme Court (June 11th)*. Militants detonated a car bomb outside the Supreme Court complex in Kabul, destroying three buses packed with low-level civilian court workers leaving their workplace in late afternoon. At least 17 civilians were killed and 39 wounded. The chief justice was in his office at the time of the attack and escaped unhurt. A Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in an email statement that a suicide bomber had carried out the attack. He justified the attack against the court's employees, saying they had been "sentenced to death" because of their "important role in cruelty, bad behavior with our countrymen, and legalizing the infidels" (Nordland, 2013b).

4. *Green Zone (June 25th)*. Eight attackers driving two vehicles penetrated the most highly-secured area in the heart of the Afghan capital: the Green Zone, housing the presidential palace, the ministry of defense, the US embassy, and ISAF headquarters. The Ariana Hotel is also located here, which the Taliban claims the CIA uses as its headquarters; indeed, a group spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that the hotel had been the primary target of the attack ("Afghan Taliban

claims killing scores,” 2013). The two vehicles—sports utility vehicles (SUVs) resembling those used by international forces, according to initial reports—approached the eastern gate to the Green Zone. The first vehicle got past the sole checkpoint, driving close to one of the entrances to the CIA compound before security forces engaged the attackers in a long-running firefight. The second vehicle was stopped at the checkpoint, where security guards began shooting at the insurgents. When the gun battle ended hours later, the attackers and three private guards had been killed (Rubin, 2013).

5. *Camp North Gate (July 2nd)*. In the early morning hours, three suicide attackers stormed Camp North Gate, a civilian base located about 24 miles from Bagram Air Base and housing employees of the military contractor DynCorp International. After a three-and-a-half hour fight, the three attackers and five security guards lay dead (Ahmed, 2013b). A Taliban statement later claimed (in gross exaggeration) that 33 soldiers, guards, and other employees had been killed and another 46 wounded (“Afghan Taliban gives reports,” 2013).



Figure 27: Afghan Taliban fighters studying a model of a targeted base. Source: “Afghan Taliban gives reports,” 2013.

Based on this admittedly cursory overview of the Taliban’s dual political/military approach thus far in 2013, how would we characterize its actions in terms of the strategy-set collection derived above? An initial reading of the group’s statements and actions suggests that the Taliban’s strategy set best approximates **BDF** (see Table 7):

Table 7: *Afghan Taliban Strategy Set, 2013.*

Strategy Set	Description	Insurgent Approach
BDF	Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Infiltrate security forces + Irregular warfare + Participate in peace talks/polio campaign	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>

Consistent with **Strategy B**, the Taliban is trying to subvert the power and authority of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA—the “outgroup”). Its negotiating strategy, for example, emphasizes talks with American rather than Afghan interlocutors. Though it grudgingly acknowledges that eventually it may have to talk to the GIROA, it will do so only if the needs of the moment compel it to do so. This dismissal of the Karzai regime as peripheral to the peace process is intended to undercut the government’s legitimacy as the representative of the Afghan state and people (the symbolical strategic effect sought in the flag and nameplate controversy associated with the opening of the Doha office). As another element of its subversive strategy, the Taliban resorts to insider or “green on blue” attacks in order to undermine the GIROA’s alliance with the US and other coalition members. It infiltrates fighters into the ANSF, or “turns” those who are already members of the security forces, so that they can carry out attacks against international military force personnel, thereby fostering bitterness and suspicion between coalition troops and Afghan security personnel. Finally, the Taliban tries to “hollow out” the administration by urging GIROA officials to defect and by encouraging key leaders in Afghan society to dissuade their followers from supporting the government (e.g., warning their young men not to join the ANSF).

As part of its overall strategy set, the Taliban also employs **Strategy D**, defending the ingroup¹⁸ through violent action. The Taliban has yet to renounce the use of force. Nor is it interested in a ceasefire so long as foreign forces “occupy” Afghanistan. Quoting group spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, “We will continue our military operations until our country is liberated from the hands of invaders” (Ahmed, 2013b). To this end, the Taliban engages in asymmetric warfare, carrying out complex or co-ordinated, high-profile attacks as part of a highly sophisticated POTD strategy. Its stated rules of engagement emphasize, though, that these attacks are to be limited to military targets and installations only, and that every effort must be made to protect Afghan civilians and prevent collateral damage. The apparent importance attached to the protection of civilians—i.e., defending the ingroup—again suggests an intent consistent with **Strategy D**.

Parallel and simultaneous to **Strategy D**, the Taliban seeks to sustain the ingroup (see Footnote 16 below) by bolstering its own role as the leading element of that ingroup, corresponding to **Strategy F**. One means to this end has been to increase its engagement with the international community. A key development on this score is the opening of the political office in Doha. Most immediately, the office serves as a support centre for renewed peace talks with the Americans. But its broader functions are to serve as an international media centre as well as an embassy to the

¹⁸ Ostensibly the Afghan people, though it can be reasonably argued that the Taliban’s base is more narrowly restricted to the Pashtun ethnic group.

international community at large. Moreover, it is the symbolism of the office and its trappings (i.e., the controversial display of the Taliban flag and nameplate) which is of greatest importance, offering tangible evidence of international acceptance of the Taliban as a legitimate player on the Afghan political scene. Additional examples of active engagement with the international community include: reaching an agreement with the Qatari government on the conditions governing the operation of the political office; cooperating with the WHO and UNICEF in the national polio vaccination campaign; and releasing unharmed the hostages of a sister Muslim state (the Turkish engineers). While these actions may be consistent with a shrewdly conceived and executed **Strategy F**, this does not mean that the Taliban or its followers don't make stupid mistakes. Its harsh brand of "justice," (e.g., beheading a young boy thought to be on friendly terms with local police forces) does more to alienate the local populace than to reinforce the perception of the Taliban as a legitimate force for law and order. In other words, atrocities such as this definitely detract from the successful implementation of **Strategy F**.

On this basis, we can reasonably conclude that the Taliban's strategy set is **BDF**. *Or is it?* The problem here is that many of the actions described above are ambiguous; they can be interpreted as consistent with different, sometimes conflicting, strategies. For example, is the irregular warfare in which the Taliban engages in the Khalid bin Waleed offensive consonant with **Strategy D** or **Strategy A** (Attack Outgroup)? The Taliban's targeting strategy in the campaign—shifting from foreign forces to the ANSF—implies an intent to weaken the GIRoA and its security forces during the critical transitional period when combat operations are being turned over from ISAF to the ANSF. Moreover, the resort to indiscriminate TTPs, such as IEDs and suicide bombings, that cause mass civilian casualties strongly suggests that the focus of military operations is more on attacking the outgroup (**Strategy A**) than protecting the ingroup (**Strategy D**).

Similarly, there is ambiguity with respect to the actions depicted above as **Strategy F**. The Taliban claims it is committed to a peaceful solution to the armed conflict. Nevertheless, it has not called a halt to its military operations. These actions are not necessarily contradictory, if they are indeed indicative of **Strategy F**. The relentless series of attacks on the capital, for example, could be violent *beyond the table* negotiating tactics intended to strengthen the Taliban's hand in the Doha peace talks: demonstrating to Washington and Kabul the costs of a failure to accommodate its interests and demands, or enhancing the credibility of its military threat. Some Afghan officials seem to hold this view. Commenting on the June 25th assault on the Green Zone, Musa Hotak, a member of the Afghan High Peace council, remarked "The only conclusion from today's attack

that I can draw is that the Taliban want to put pressure on the Afghan government to accept their preconditions for talks and give up on some of its preconditions” (Rubin, 2013).

However, if the Taliban’s military actions are geared more towards attacking the outgroup (**Strategy A**) than defending the ingroup (**Strategy D**), then its willingness to take part in resurrected peace talks may only be “top cover” for violent actions intended to precipitate the collapse of the GIRoA. In other words, rather than **Strategy F**, its participation in the peace process may be an indicator of **Strategy C**, a strategy of stealth or deception intended to place the GIRoA at a strategic disadvantage.

If these alternative readings of the Taliban’s actions are accurate, then the strategy set for the group may more appropriately be characterized as **ABC** (see Table 8):

Table 8: Alternative Afghan Taliban Strategy Set, 2013.

Strategy Set	Description	Insurgent Approach
ABC	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup e.g., Irregular warfare + Infiltrate security forces + Participate in peace talks	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>

Thus, we have two competing interpretations of the Taliban’s actions, with the difference between the two turning on the question of intentions. What does the Taliban ultimately hope to achieve?

It is difficult to infer intentions (or ends) from ways and means alone.

Is it genuinely committed to a peaceful resolution of its conflict with Kabul and its international allies, and willing to join in a post-conflict, power-

sharing government? Or is it only biding its time, waiting for foreign forces to withdraw in 2014 before delivering the *coup de grâce* that will topple the regime and allow it to take up the reins of power that were stripped from it in 2001? As the preceding analysis demonstrates, the ambiguity of the Taliban’s actions makes it difficult to infer the group’s intentions from its behaviour.

Can we clarify matters if we bring into the discussion the grand strategic and strategic levels? What role or roles could the Taliban be playing at each level? To start with, the Taliban claims to have limited political aspirations. In opening its Doha political office, the group announced that its political and military goals are limited to Afghanistan, and it promised not to serve as a safe

haven or base of operations for terrorist groups like al Qaeda. Further, it insisted that it is committed to “a political and peaceful solution” to the Afghan conflict, one that brings about an end to the foreign occupation of the country. If we can credit these claims, this would suggest that, at the strategic level, the Taliban sees itself in the role of a *Pragmatic Partner* (PrgP), with its willingness to engage in talks with the US placing it *inside* the peace process. Recall from our earlier discussion that a PrgP is committed to the ultimate success of the peace process. However, this commitment is *contingent* upon securing the limited goals to which it is highly committed. In other words, peace for the PrgP is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The PrgP’s commitment to peace is also contingent on the prior or, at a minimum, simultaneous fulfillment of the other parties’ obligations. Confidence-building measures, therefore—like the five-for-one prisoner exchange that is likely to be one of the first items on the agenda of talks with the US—are instrumental in order to build trust and confidence in the process and in the other parties. If it is indeed a *Pragmatic Partner*, “reverse engineering” from this strategic role implies that the Taliban is also a *Stakeholder* at the grand strategic level, that is, an ANSA willing to share in existing state structures and institutions with other major players in a conflict.

The problem, though, is that the Taliban does not seem to fit this grand strategic profile. Rather, its statements strongly suggest that the group sees itself in the role of *Transformer*. It seeks to remake Afghan society, not simply to co-exist within the current constitutional framework with today’s power brokers in Kabul. The group’s transformative or total goals are (1) to free the nation from foreign occupation, (2) cleanse the country from “the rule of disbelief” or apostasy, and (3) replace it with an independent Islamic government based on Shariah law (“Afghan Taliban Announces Start,” 2013). If this is a better characterization of the Taliban’s grand strategic role, then the corresponding role it plays at the strategic level is more appropriately that of the *Total Spoiler*, an actor highly committed to seizing exclusive political power so that it might implement its transformative goals; the fact of its participation in and ostensible commitment to the peace process makes it an *Inside Total Spoiler*. As an *Inside Spoiler*, its commitment to the peace process is at most temporary and tactical. Thus, its participation in the peace process is meant to buy time: time to legitimize its status, time to weaken the GIRoA through subversion and direct attack, and time to let foreign combat forces withdraw, after which Kabul will be “ripe for the picking.” But, rather than minimize violence as spoiler theory predicts, the Taliban has taken a different tack, trying to divorce the military from the political track. For example, in a statement concerning the July 2nd attack on Camp North Gate, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid insisted that “This attack has no connection to any peace process whatsoever” (Ahmed, 2013b). In this way, the Taliban hopes to preserve its credibility as a partner in peace and to retain the advantages it derives from continued involvement in the process.

Unfortunately, this leaves us no closer to a definitive read of the Taliban. We confront two competing representations of the group, its roles and strategies, as summarized in Table 9:

Table 9: Afghan Taliban: Grand Strategic Roles, Strategic Roles, and Strategies.

Grand Strategic Role	Strategic Role	Goals	Commitment to Goals	Commitment to Peace Process	Strategic Set
				Inside (I)	
Stakeholder (S)	Pragmatic Partner (PrgP)	Limited	High	Contingent 15. PrgP (I)	BDF Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup
Transformer (T)	Total Spoiler (TS)	Total	High	Tactical 9. TS (T/I)	ABC Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup

Which better characterizes this ANSA? The answer to this question demands a much deeper analysis than is possible here. But that answer will critically determine how the US, its allies, and its (often prickly) partners in Kabul manage the withdrawal of international combat forces and its aftermath.

6 Final Thoughts

This has been a lengthy discourse on Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs), their identities, roles, and strategies. Certainly, the reader may be forgiven if the thread of the argument has become tangled along the way. Thus, let us summarize the thrust of the argument set out here.

Recall our statement of the central problem: *the Canadian national security community has an overly narrow view of the strategic roles of ANSAs and the strategies they employ*. CAF doctrine paints a single-hue picture of an ANSA as a violent, irreconcilable foe. We described this picture in the Introduction (reproduced here), and can now enlarge upon this picture using the concepts presented in the analysis (highlighted in italics below):

The lodestone for an armed non-state actor is political power. At a minimum, the ANSA is committed to seizing political power [*Captor*] from the established authorities [*the outgroup*]; in the extreme, it seeks to transform society's fundamental political, economic, and social institutions and relationships in line with its (often utopian) vision of the world [*Transformer*]. The ANSA sees "the people" [*the ingroup*] as the centre of gravity in its drive for power, and sees itself as the leading element [*Vanguard*] in the people's struggle for survival, whether as a distinct class, cultural or ethnic group, or other "imagined community." It tries to win, if not the allegiance, at least the acquiescence of the local populace over the course of a protracted politico-military campaign characterized largely by violence and intimidation [*Protracted Popular War*]. The path to power, as far as the ANSA is concerned, does not lie in peaceful engagement with its opponents. Rather, it stands in implacable, violent opposition to the peaceful resolution of social conflict [*Total Spoiler*]; its reliance on violence [*Strategy A*] and subversion [*Strategy B*] only confirms its true, destructive intentions. Granted, at some point in its drive for power, the ANSA may agree to participate in a formal peace process. However, this is, at best, a tactical manoeuvre [*Inside Spoiler*]. The ANSA publicly proclaims its fidelity to the peaceful settlement of armed conflict, all the while working behind the scenes—often using carefully calibrated and deniable violent activity—to undermine any peace process and weaken its enemies [*Strategy C*]... (p. 12,14)

To put it succinctly in the terms used in this analysis, the picture of an ANSA that emerges from CAF doctrine is that of a grand-strategic *Captor* or *Transformer* that sees itself, at the strategic level, as the vanguard of "the people," engaged in a protracted popular war using violent and non-violent action to attack and subvert the outgroup. If it joins in a peace process, it does so only as a

Total Inside Spoiler, employing a strategy of stealth to deceive the outgroup and to mask its limited tactical commitment to the process.

This is how the Canadian national security community generally conceives of the stereotypical ANSA. Not entirely inaccurate, yet not entirely adequate. In the analysis that followed, we tried to flesh out a more nuanced understanding of this complex class of social actor. Along the way, we used *highlight boxes*—grey-shaded text boxes—to draw attention to the key points of the argument. Here, we pull together these highlight boxes and incorporate them in a *Concept Map* (see Figure 27). Briefly, a Concept Map (Cmap) is a visual model for organizing and representing knowledge, consisting of a semi-hierarchical arrangement of concepts and propositions (see Moore, 2012a for a detailed discussion of Cmaps and their construction). A Cmap allows us to graphically portray the flow of the argument extending over the preceding 89 pages of text in one concise Figure.

Two important points regarding the Cmap in Figure 27 should be noted. First, the Cmap does not describe the *characteristics* of an ANSA *per se* (e.g., membership, decision-making structures, recruitment techniques, etc.).¹⁹ Rather, it is representation of the *knowledge* generated in this paper about ANSAs and their identities, roles, and strategies. Second, concepts contained in the nodes or boxes of a Cmap are typically designated by a word or short phrase. In Figure 27, the nodes contain the full text of the conclusions reproduced from the highlight boxes. The concepts relevant to the Cmap *propositions*²⁰ are the words or phrases highlighted in bold/italics in the nodes. So, for example, the two propositions consisting of the triples (*concept* → *linking words* → *concept*) presented in Figure 28 should be read as

Roles→*include*→*Vanguard*

and

Vanguard→*subsumes*→*Spoiler & Partner*

Let us summarize, then, the knowledge generated in this analysis as represented in the Cmap in Figure 27 (starting with the uppermost node and working our way down through the branches of the knowledge tree). We began by defining the concept of an *Armed Non-state Actor* (ANSA),

¹⁹ For an example of a Cmap describing an Irregular Adversary (Insurgent) derived from CAF doctrine, the reader is again referred to Moore, 2012a.

²⁰ A *proposition* specifies the relationship between two concepts using linking words or phrases to form meaningful statements; also referred to as *semantic units* or *units of meaning*.

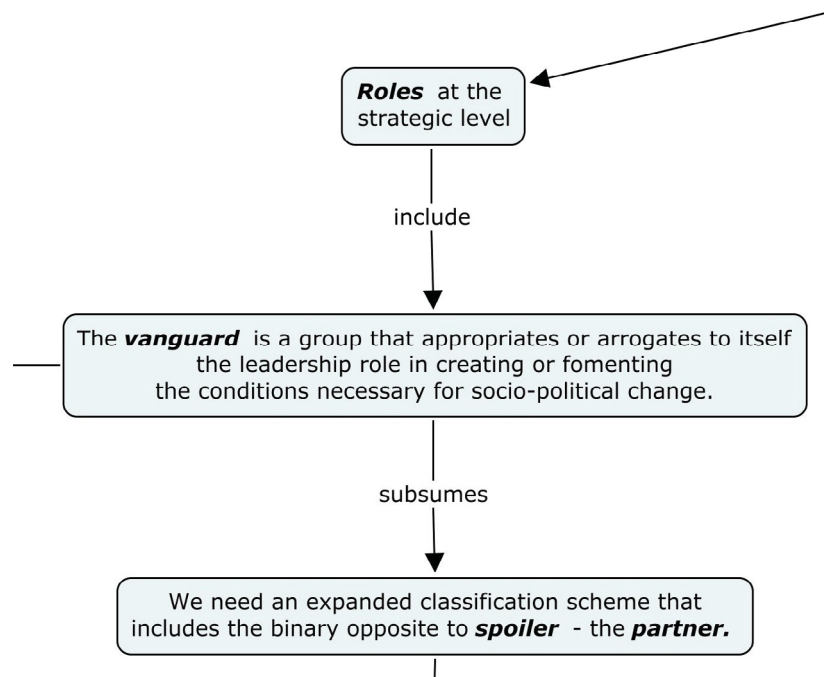


Figure 29: Summary Concept Map—Two Propositions.

itself a neutral, technical term by which we hope to avoid prejudging these social actors through the labels we assign to them. Next, we set out the theoretical approach upon which the analysis is grounded. Role theory provides us with insight on the *social roles* and *role identities* that social actors enact and hold. One of the key inferences from role theory tells us that, of the multiple roles we enact every day, different ones are *salient* for different individuals and groups at different times and in different circumstances. Before we can explore the various conditions and circumstances that influence an ANSA's choice of role identities, we must first *establish the range of roles that are available to ANSAs*; this research task lies at the heart of this paper. We can identify three distinct role identities at the grand strategic level: *Transformers*, *Captors*, and *Stakeholders*. At the strategic level, ANSAs generally regard themselves as the *Vanguard* of their respective ingroups. Under this umbrella role identity, ANSAs may play secondary strategic roles of *spoiler* and *partner* in the context of a peace process intended to end an armed conflict. As for spoilers, we noted that

- *other state* and *non-state actors*—and not only ANSAs—may engage in spoiling behaviour,

- spoiling behaviour is *actor-specific* and *context-dependent*,
- spoilers are *discursively constructed*, and
- ANSAs and other spoilers may engage in spoiling behaviour *in any arena* and *at any stage* of a peace process.

As for partners, the features distinguishing them from spoilers are that

- they are *willing to share power* with other social actors, and, most importantly,
- they have made *a strategic commitment to peace*, the key to resolving violent social conflict.

Combining role identities at the grand strategic and strategic levels yields a comprehensive typology of 16 archetypical strategic roles, ranging from the *Outside Total Spoiler* (the stereotypical ANSA) to the *Inside Principled Partner*.

In terms of strategies, ANSAs have a vast *strategic repertoire* from which they may choose. The ends of these strategies may be either *destructive* or *constructive*, while the ways and means may be *violent*, *non-violent* or *cooperative*. Combining ends and ways/means yields six feasible strategies, which may be blended in turn to form 63 possible strategy sets, each with multiple variants. Clearly, this strategic repertoire encompasses much more than merely destructive violence. Though violent action may be used to attack and weaken an opponent and/or to obstruct the peaceful resolution of conflict, it can also be used constructively to empower an ANSA and the ingroup it purports to represent and/or to initiate, sustain, and support a peace process. Given this ambiguity, we must be careful when inferring intentions based solely on an ANSA's manifest violent behaviour.

The exercise in which we have engaged in this paper—where we have explored the multiplicity of role identities ANSAs may hold and the wide range of strategies they may enact—can be seen as both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that it helps us to better appreciate the essential complexity of this class of social actors. It is a curse in so far as it frustrates our attempts at predicting ANSA behaviour. The advantage of the stereotypical picture of ANSAs lies in its simplicity. The conventional ANSA “model” is made up of essentially two variables. It assumes ANSAs are driven by a single motivation—to seize dominant, if not exclusive, political power—and pursue this single-minded ambition using an unvarying strategy of destructive violence. This simplicity allows for *precise prediction* of ANSA behaviour, at least at the higher strategic level.

However, in the human domain, we have to deal with “structures whose characteristic properties can be exhibited only by models made up of relatively large numbers of variables” (“Friedrich August von Hayek,” 1974, p. 3). These “phenomena of organized complexity” (Warren Weaver, cited in *ibid.*)—of which ANSAs are one—allow for, at best, *pattern predictions*, that is, “predictions of some of the general attributes of the structures that will form themselves, but not containing specific statements about the individual elements of which the structures will be made up” (“Friedrich August von Hayek,” 1974, p. 4). We can offer up general predictions of the kinds of strategic roles and strategies we might expect from ANSAs in any given set of circumstances. However, precise prediction of ANSA behaviour is a goal that dangles tantalizingly beyond our reach. Admittedly not a very satisfactory state of affairs, but to echo the sentiment of Nobel economics laureate Friedrich August von Hayek: “I prefer true but imperfect knowledge, even if it leaves much indetermined and unpredictable, to a pretence of exact knowledge that is likely to be false” (*ibid.*, p. 5).

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Annex A Generic ANSA Strategy Sets

Strategy Set	Description	Insurgent Approach
ABC	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Passive Sabotage + Clandestine Organization	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
ABD	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Passive Sabotage	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
ABE	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ABF	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Passive Sabotage + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ACD	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Clandestine Organization	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
ACE	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ACF	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ADE	Attack Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ADF	Attack Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>

	e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Defensive)</i>
AEF	Attack Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BCD	Subvert Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Passive Sabotage + Clandestine Organization + Terrorist Bombing	<i>Conspiratorial or Urban</i>
BCE	Subvert Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Clandestine Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BCF	Subvert Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BDE	Subvert Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Terrorist Bombing	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BDF	Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BEF	Subvert Outgroup+ Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Non-violent Struggle</i>
CDE	Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Clandestine Organization + Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
CDF	Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
CEF	Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>

DEF	Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Terrorist Bombing + Labour Strike + Front Organization	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
ABCD	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Passive Sabotage + Nominal Ceasefire	<i>Foco (Military-Focused)</i>
ABCE	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABCF	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Passive Sabotage + Nominal Ceasefire + Shadow Government	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABDE	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABDF	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Passive Sabotage + Shadow Government	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABEF	Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike + Shadow Government	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ACDE	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Nominal Ceasefire + Labour Strike	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ACDF	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Nominal Ceasefire + Shadow Government	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ACEF	Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Nominal Ceasefire + Labour Strike + Shadow Government	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>

ADEF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
BCDE	<p>Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire + Guerrilla Activity</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
BCDF	<p>Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire + Guerrilla Activity + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
BCEF	<p>Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Labour Strike + Front Organization</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase I—Strategic Defensive)</i>
BDEF	<p>Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Labour Strike + Guerrilla Activity + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
CDEF	<p>Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Nominal Ceasefire + Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABCDE	<p>Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Guerrilla Activity + Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABCDF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Large-scale Combat Operations + Passive Sabotage + Nominal Ceasefire + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase III—Strategic Counteroffensive)</i>
ABCEF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Large-scale Combat Operations + Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase III—Strategic Counteroffensive)</i>
ABDEF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Large-scale Combat Operations + Labour Strike + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase III—Strategic Counteroffensive)</i>

ACDEF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Large-scale Combat Operations + Peace Process + Labour Strike + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase III—Strategic Counteroffensive)</i>
BCDEF	<p>Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Labour Strike + Nominal Ceasefire + Guerrilla Activity + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase II—Strategic Stalemate)</i>
ABCDEF	<p>Attack Outgroup + Subvert Outgroup+ Deceive Outgroup + Defend Ingroup + Mobilize Ingroup + Sustain Ingroup</p> <p>e.g., Large-scale Combat Operations + Labour Strike + Peace Process + Shadow Government</p>	<i>Protracted Popular War (Phase III—Strategic Counteroffensive)</i>

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List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire)
AIF	Anti-Iraq Forces
ANC	African National Congress
ANSA	Armed Non-state Actor
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AOG	Armed opposition group
AQ	Al-Qaeda (The Base)
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
ARP	Advanced Research Project
Bgen	Brigadier General
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cmap	Concept Map
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COMINTER	International Committee (FARC)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DND	Department of National Defence
DRDC	Defence Research & Development Canada
EIJ	Tanzim al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad)
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)
FARC–EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army)
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front)
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front)
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group)
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Hamas	Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-‘Islāmiyyah (Islamic Resistance Movement)
HIG	Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (Islamic Party—Gulbuddin)
HT	Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (The Party of Islamic Liberation)

IDF	Indirect fire
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	Improvised explosive device
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq (also AQI)
JAM	Jaish al Mahdi (Mahdi Army)
JI	Jama‘at-e-Islami (Islamic Party)
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MB	al-’Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (The Society of the Muslim Brothers or the Muslim Brotherhood)
MHS	Mutually Hurting Stalemate
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NSA	Non-state Actor
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PBIED	Person-borne IED
PCP, also PCP-SL	Partido Comunista del Perú (Communist Party of Peru), also Partido Comunista del Perú–Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru–Shining Path)
PIJ	Harakat al-Jihād al-Islāmi fi Filastin (Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine or Palestinian Islamic Jihad)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers’ Party)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMC	Private military company
POTD	Propaganda of the deed
POW	Prisoner of war
PRK	People’s Republic of Kampuchea
PSC	Private security company
R&D	Research & Development
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
S&T	Science & Technology

SAF	Small arms fire
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Egypt)
SCS	Socio-cognitive Systems
SUV	Sports utility vehicle
SVBIED	Suicide vehicle-borne IED
TIF	Technology Investment Fund
TM	Technical Memorandum
TNSM	Tekrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (The Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia)
TTP	Tactics, techniques, and procedures
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USC	United Somali Congress
VBIED	Vehicle-borne IED
VNSA	Violent Non-state Actor
WHO	World Health Organization

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The Socio-cognitive Systems (SCS) Section at DRDC Toronto has undertaken a Technology Investment Fund (TIF) Project entitled *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics*. The aim of this multi-year Project is to advance our understanding of

- the strategic roles of ANSAs in the context of violent intergroup conflict, and
- the operational dynamics—that is, the group structures, functions, and processes—of ANSAs, in both their internal and external aspects, that facilitate the performance of these roles.

Broadly speaking, we seek to shed some light upon what ANSAs do and why they do it, situating their motivations, intent, and behaviours in the wider context of violent intergroup conflict. And, most importantly, we hope to answer the question whether, with this understanding, we can predict what ANSAs are likely to do in a given set of circumstances. This Technical Memorandum (TM) presents some reflections on the first of these two research objectives: the strategic roles of ANSAs. It is one of two interlocking Keystone Documents in Phase 1 Conceptual Development of the Project, the primary task of which is to define the Project's conceptual problem space.

La Section des systèmes sociocognitifs (SCS) de RDDC Toronto a entrepris un projet financé par le Fonds d'investissement technologique (FIT) intitulé *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics* (Cadre conceptuel pour comprendre les motivations des acteurs armés non étatiques (AANE) : rôles stratégiques et dynamique opérationnelle). Ce projet pluriannuel vise à accroître nos connaissances par rapport aux aspects suivants :

- Les rôles stratégiques des AANE dans le cadre de conflits intergroupes violents
- La dynamique opérationnelle – c'est-à-dire les structures, les fonctions et les procédés collectifs – des AANE, liée à la fois à des aspects internes et externes et qui facilite l'adoption des rôles stratégiques.

De façon générale, nous cherchons à comprendre ce que font les AANE et pourquoi ils le font, et à déterminer leurs motivations, leurs intentions et leurs comportements dans le contexte des conflits intergroupes violents. Plus important encore, nous espérons savoir, avec les connaissances acquises, s'il est possible de *prévoir ce qu'un AANE est susceptible de faire* dans un ensemble donné de circonstances. Ce document technique (DT) présente certaines réflexions sur le premier de ces deux objectifs de recherche, soit les rôles stratégiques des AANE. Il est le premier de deux documents clés qui ont été produits dans le cadre de la phase du développement théorique du projet, dont la tâche principale est de définir la question conceptuelle du projet.

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Armed Non-state Actor (ANSA); social role; collective identity; strategy

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